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"WHO ARE YOU?" GRIND PAULINE BRENT, BREATHLESSLY, WHILE A SHIVER SHOOK HER LIMBS.

"SOME DAY."

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

It was the first of May—such a May day as poets write of, and their readers are forced, as a rule, to take on trust. A day of perfect sunshine, blue skies, soft warm air, balmy with the breath of flowers that were springing up in all sorts of likely and unlikely places, and yet with a certain freshness in the atmosphere that only comes with the youngest and fairest daughter of the seasons.

Brentwood Park looked its best, and the old house, with its ivies and lichens, its carved oak doorway, and deep oriel windows made a picture pretty enough to delight the heart of any artist.

Claudia Brent, its young mistress, turned back to look at it once or twice as she sauntered

slowly along the park, and towards a little plantation of young larches, whose foliage of freshest, tenderest green, was gently swaying about in the light breezes.

But if the house made a pretty picture, the young girl herself made a far prettier, with her blue eyes and yellow hair, which unconfined, fell in long, sun-bright tresses below her waist; and her white dress, and large, broad-brimmed hat set off her beauty to the greatest advantage.

In her hand she carried a basket, which she intended filling with primroses, but which, at the present moment, she was swaying idly about to and fro.

Heart-whole and fancy-free was Claudia, for only eighteen summers had passed over her head, and as yet she had not been presented at Court, and all her life had been spent at Brentwood, where as Sir Everard Brent's only daughter and heiress, she was treated like some young princess, on whose path only rose-leaves must be strewn.

As she reached the plantation, secure in the

belief that no one was likely to hear her, she broke into a song,—

"Some day—some day I shall meet him,
I know not when or how."

She left off suddenly, and with a little scream—for a huge St. Bernard dog had sprung out from the bushes, so abruptly that she was completely taken by surprise, and for the moment was conscious of something very like fear.

"Rollo! Come here, sir!" cried a masculine voice, in sharp tones of authority, and a second later, a tall, good-looking young man stood before her, raising his hat with very palpable admiration in his eyes. "I beg your pardon—I will you accept my apologies on my dog's behalf! I am sure he did not mean to alarm you."

"How can you be sure of it?" asked Claudia, with a smile, for she had now quite recovered her self-possession.

"Because I know him well enough to answer for him," returned the young man, with a responsive smile. "He is the most gallant dog in

existence, and would not willingly annoy a lady for the world, would you, Rollo?"

Rollo wagged his tail in instant approval of his master's words, and looked up into Claudia's face, as much as to say, "Indeed, it is quite true!"

"Beg the lady's pardon!"

The dog put up his paw, and shook his head sadly, as if with deep contrition.

"He is a beautiful creature!" said Claudia, accepting the proffered paw, and patting him with her other hand, while the young man picked up the basket which she in her fright had dropped. "Is he old or young?"

"He has just completed his fourth year, so one can hardly call him a puppy. He is the greatest friend I possess in the world, and goes everywhere with me—even when I am trespassing, as is, I fear, the case at the present moment. The fact is, however, I was so much struck by the splendid view one gets of the house just here that I was tempted to make a sketch."

"A sketch of Brentwood!" repeated Claudia, with some excitement, and quite unconscious that there was anything wrong in staying and talking thus to a perfect stranger. "Pray let me see it."

"Certainly. I shall be only too delighted to show it you," he returned, with alacrity; and he picked up a sketch-book which Claudia now perceived had been lying on the ground close to a moss-covered tree-trunk that was stretched across the path.

"Oh, how pretty!" she exclaimed, enthusiastically, as she saw the picture of the old house, with the sunshine falling on its time-wrought beauties. "But it has taken you more than this morning to do all this!"

"Yes," in slight confusion. "I commenced it yesterday."

"Then you are an artist!"

"I call myself one," modestly.

"I wish I could paint like that!" murmured the young girl. Then a sudden idea seemed to strike her, and she said, quickly, "Have you any other sketches with you?"

"Yes—one or two. I will show them to you if you like."

She assented eagerly, and seated herself on the tree-trunk, while he knelt beside her, and exhibited the contents of his portfolio.

"They are nearly all pictures of country houses," she observed, in some surprise.

"Yes. I am making a series of sketches of English mansions, which are to be brought out presently by a London firm of fine art publishers," he replied, "by which," with a smile, at once proud and sad, "you will understand that I work for my living."

"And are you going to put our house amongst these?"

"Your house?" in some surprise.

"I mean my father's—he is Sir Everard Brent, and I am his daughter," replied Claudia, with perfect simplicity, and the artist looked half-annoyed; for he had certainly not supposed himself to be in conversation with the Baronet's heiress, whom he imagined to be a haughty young patrician, far too grand to take any notice of a casual acquaintance like himself.

"I wished to include Brentwood Park in my collection if I could obtain Sir Everard's permission to do so," he returned, in answer to her question. "I intended writing and asking him whether he would object."

"He would like it," declared Claudia, with a confident nod. "He is very proud of our dear old home, and it will please him for other people to admire it as well. I will tell him I met you if you like, and then he will feel more interest when you write."

"You are very kind," murmured the young man, slightly embarrassed, and hardly knowing what answer to make to this magnanimous offer uttered by the young girl with the prettiest naïveté it is possible to imagine.

In spite of her eighteen years, Claudia was in reality little more than a child; for her father—unconventional himself—had done his best to cultivate the natural simplicity of her character, which formed such an agreeable contrast to the

artificial manners of so many young ladies of to-day.

"This is Rollo, isn't it?" she asked, holding up a bold and spirited drawing of the dog, who was truly a magnificent specimen of his tribe.

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"It is splendid—splendid!" she repeated.

The artist hesitated a moment, then said, with a certain amount of diffidence—as if he did not feel quite sure whether he was right in yielding to a sudden impulse,—

"Would you honour me by accepting it?"

"Do you mean you will give it me for my own? Oh, that is kind of you! Thank you very much!"

There was not a shade of awkwardness or consciousness in her lovely, lustrous eyes, as she lifted them to his, neither did she make any attempt to conceal the pleasure his present gave her.

Every moment made the young man more interested in her. She seemed to him the fairest and sweetest specimen of womanhood it had ever been his good fortune to meet, and yet there was something in her very innocence which no man would dare take advantage of, and which protected her as well as all the barriers society has raised to hedge round its votaries.

She rose from her mossy seat with a half-regretful sigh. Now that she had seen all the sketches there seemed nothing else to stay for, and yet she was conscious of enjoying her *tit à tête* with this stranger, and feeling rather loth to go away. But she had one more question to ask before taking her departure.

"Is this your name?" pointing to his signature on the outside of the portfolio, "Lionel Fane?"

"Yes," he rejoined, and then Claudia made him a little bow, and disappeared in the plantation, making her way towards one particular glade where she knew, by experience, the primroses grew most luxuriantly.

For some time after she left him Lionel stood in exactly the same attitude, looking after her, and trying to recall every word she had uttered, and bring back to his memory the soft music of her voice as she said good-bye. Some words of Shakespeare's recurred to his mind.

"He never loved who loved not at first sight!"

Hitherto, artist though he was, Fane had been rather sceptical with regard to the power of feminine charms, so far as he himself was concerned.

He had seen many lovely women during his travels, and while confessing their beauty had found himself quite unmoved by it, and had come to the conclusion that there must be something lacking in his nature which had prevented, and would always prevent, beauty from having that effect upon him which it seemed to have on other men.

Now he found his mistake. This young girl, with her azure eyes and sun-kissed hair, haunted him with a pertinacity against which he was powerless to struggle.

He tried to go on with his sketch, but the effort was fruitless, for always before his eyes there floated that sweet, flower-like face, and over in his ears there rung the cadences of her voice—more musical than a peal of silver bells.

At last he got up impatiently, and gathered his sketching materials together, deciding that it was quite useless to try and continue working any longer, since it was perfectly clear that he was not in the mood to do anything save fall into reveries concerning his morning's adventure.

"Come on, Rollo!" he said to the dog. "We will go back to our cottage, and then take a long—long walk, and see if we can get rid of the spell that has been cast on us."

He had come to the village of Brentwood about three days ago, and had taken a couple of rooms in a tiny house, whose picturesque appearance and flower-covered porch had, in the first instance attracted him.

The country all round was very lovely, and it had struck him that he would be able to make a good many sketches of the surrounding scenery, as well as of the Park itself, but he had certainly not bargained for the disturbing element of a

girl's charming presence to distract his thought, and render him unfit for any serious work.

Meanwhile, after filling her basket with primroses, Claudia had returned home in time for luncheon, and had gone first into the morning-room—a long, low apartment, charmingly furnished with numberless arm-chairs, with tables of all sizes and shapes and descriptions, with dwarf bookcases filled with Claudia's favourite volumes, and with pots and vases, and baskets of flowers in every conceivable place.

Claudia loved flowers, and was never happy unless she was surrounded by them; and as the gardens and conservatories of the Park were very extensive, she was enabled to gratify her taste.

The only person at present in the room was a woman of about forty—tall, stately, and with a face that was still beautiful, although it bore the marks of deep sorrow, and a yet deeper pride. This was Pauline Brent, the Baronet's only sister, and the actual mistress of the house.

Strangers who saw her for the first time often wondered why she had not married, and declared themselves fascinated by the perfect statuesque beauty of her features, and the long-lashed loveliness of her large grey eyes; but the inhabitants of Brentwood could have told a tale of a past romance which had made Miss Brent's hair grow grey in a single week, and had brought the strange, strained look on her face that had never since left it—they did not wonder at her remaining single.

"Auntie!" cried Claudia, putting down her basket of flowers, and throwing off the broad-brimmed hat, "I have had an adventure this morning, and it has quite excited me. I met such a handsome young man in the plantation, and look what he has given me!"

She exhibited her sketch, which Miss Brent just glanced at, and then put down.

"I am afraid, Claudia, you are rather too wild to be allowed to wander about alone much longer," she said. "I don't know who the handsome young man is to whom you allude may be, but it is certainly not proper for you to make acquaintance with strangers, even on your father's own estate."

The young girl's face clouded. She had come home in the highest spirits, and anxious to tell all that had happened between herself and Fane, and it was a little disappointing to be met with remonstrances at this early stage of her narrative.

"I never thought anything at all about the impropriety, auntie, dear," she said, with a downward droop of her scarlet lips.

"I daresay not, my love," drily. "You seldom think of anything save the enjoyment of the moment."

"And is not that enough?"

"It might be, if the enjoyment were not likely to have disagreeable after consequences."

"But this will have nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Claudia, impetuously. "Mr. Fane's dog jumped out upon me, and of course he had to apologize. Was there any harm in that?"

"No, certainly not. But after he had apologized there was no reason for you to stay. You ought to have gone on."

"I never thought of that," murmured the girl, with contrition. "I was so interested in his sketches. He is an artist, and he has made such a pretty picture of the Park; I am sure papa will like to see it."

"Of course he will if you praise it," observed Miss Brent, with a slightly disagreeable smile. "You know very well that whatever you say he agrees with—that, in fact, you can twist him round your finger if you choose."

"Oh, auntie, dear, don't say that! Papa is the very nicest and best of fathers, and I won't hear a word against him. Of course, I know he is very fond of me, and indulges me shamefully"—Claudia's voice became a mixture of triumph and humility—"but after all it is quite natural, for people tell me I am the image of my mother, and we know that he positively worshipped her."

Miss Brent's face grew very pale—not white, but a strange sort of ashen grey, and her lips

quivered as with some deep but repressed emotion. She was standing by a chair, and as her niece finished speaking she took hold of the back of it to support herself.

"Auntie!" cried Claudia, springing forward in some alarm. "What is the matter? Are you going to faint?"

"Nonsense!" pushing her away rather roughly. "What can have put such a foolish idea in your head?"

"Because you looked like it."

"A passing giddiness, that is all."

"Does it distress you to hear me talk of my mother? I have noticed several times, when I have spoken of her, that you grew pale and looked strange."

"Naturally it distresses me," was the low-toned answer. "It was a great trouble to all of us when she died."

"But it is a long while ago—seventeen years!"

"Yes, but grief lasts for ever!" returned Miss Brent, with a passion of pain in her voice, and as she spoke she clasped her hands across her bosom as if she would try to still the wild beating of her heart. "You don't know what it is, Claudia. Your life so far has been one of unclouded sunshine, and sorrow is to you only a name."

"Yes," murmured the girl softly. "I suppose you are right, but I very often think of my mother, and how delightful it would have been if she had lived. I seem to know nothing whatever about her, for neither you nor papa will speak to me of her, and none of the servants ever mention her name. I am aware that she died here—because she is buried in the church, but I do not even know the illness that proved fatal to her."

"There is no reason why you should know," returned Miss Brent, sharply. "It is heartless of you to bring back the remembrance of that old pain, and I have told you many times not to mention the subject before your father, seeing that it must be worse for him than it is for me. Why, can't you let the dead past bury its dead?"

As she spoke she left the room, and Claudia was as much surprised as pained at the sudden outburst she had so unwittingly evoked.

Left alone she pondered thoughtfully over the strangeness of her aunt's words and manner, and an old idea that had vaguely haunted her for a long while past gradually took shape.

There must have been something out of the common about her mother's death—some mystery, which it was thought undesirable for her to know, and it was for this reason such a careful silence had always been preserved on the subject. Otherwise, it was surely natural that Sir Everard should have spoken of the fair, young wife who had died, not down like a flower in the pride of her youth and beauty, within two years of her marriage, and only a few months after her baby's birth.

Claudia remained lost in a reverie, until the sound of the bell reminded her that luncheon was ready, and recalled her from the realms of dreams into those of matter-of-fact reality.

CHAPTER II.

THAT same night Claudia and her father were going to a dinner party at Thelby Hall—the residence of young Squire Thelby, who was their nearest neighbour, and who was suspected of a more than friendly admiration for the Baronet's beautiful daughter.

Claudia was not without a soupçon of vanity—what true woman is!—and as she stood in front of the large chival glass looking at the image it gave back, she smiled with any pleasure at the reflection of her own beauty.

"You look real lovely, miss!" said her maid, Amelia, with unfeigned admiration, and, as a matter-of-fact, she really did.

Her dress was of some glistening, silver-tinted, and round her milk-white neck and beautifully moulded arms, were strings of pearls, fastened by diamond clasps, and diamond

buckles glittered in the bows on her dainty little shoes.

"I think I do look rather nice," she murmured to herself, catching up her white feather cloak and long gloves, and then she descended to the hall, where her father, a stately, but benevolent-looking man of between fifty and sixty, was waiting for her.

"Are you sure you are wrapped up enough?" he asked, anxiously, and gazing at her with fond pride as he spoke. "These May nights are apt to get chilly, you know, and I don't want you to catch cold!"

"No danger of that, daddy, dear!" she returned, lightly. "I'm not a delicate hothouse flower, but a very healthy and substantial young woman—aren't I, auntie?" to Miss Brent, who had come out of the drawing-room to see them off.

The latter smiled, and patted her niece's shoulder.

"Yes, I don't think you are particularly fragile; nevertheless, one can't be too careful," she returned. "I hope you will have a pleasant evening."

"Oh, *cela va sans dire!* I wish you were coming with us."

"I shall be infinitely happier at home, thank you, my dear," said Miss Brent, quietly, and as they drove away, Claudia was struck anew by the beauty of her aunt, who, standing on the step to watch them off, looked a singularly statuesque and imposing figure.

"How is it auntie will never come out with us!" she asked her father. "We meet plenty of women a good deal older than she is, who seem to enjoy society, and yet she will not accept an invitation even to a quiet dinner."

"My dear," the Baronet returned, gravely, "your aunt had a great sorrow in her youth, and it turned the whole of her life into a tragedy. Some day you may hear the details, but I will not sadden you with them now."

"Was it a love affair, daddy?" asked Claudia, in a lower voice.

"Yes."

"And did her lover die?"

A spasm contracted the Baronet's features, and it was a moment before he replied.

"Her lover died—don't ask me any more questions, dear. As I said before, some day you shall know all."

But in his heart Sir Everard hoped that day might be a long way off.

Claudia was silent for a little while, and presently her father took her hand, and held it tenderly in his.

"How thoughtful you are, my darling! Were you wondering whether Thelby would admire your new dress, which is, I confess, when worn by you, quite worthy of admiration?"

"I wasn't thinking of Thelby at all," replied the girl, indifferently; "and I don't think I care much whether he likes my dress or not!"

"I am afraid you are ungrateful, and fail to appreciate Thelby's attentions"—which same attentions the Baronet himself was inclined to encourage, for the Thelby estates joined his own, and their young master would be in every respect a son-in-law to be desired.

He was rather a good-looking young man, fair, florid, and somewhat inclined to be fat—as Claudia was quick to notice when he came forward to meet them as they entered the drawing-room, and afterwards led them up to his mother—an old lady in black velvet and emeralds.

"Do you find the rooms dark?" asked the young man, seating himself by Claudia's side on the settee. "My mother would not have the lamps lighted until dinner-time, because she said it was such a shame to shut out the daylight."

"You won't have long to wait," observed the girl, for at that very moment the butler announced "dinner," and the young Squire had to get up and search out the old Dowager Countess, to whom etiquette forced him to offer his arm.

Before doing so he brought up a tall, well-built young man, who, strange to say, had two or three primroses in his button-hole.

"Miss Brent, will you allow me to introduce Mr. Lionel Fane?"

And Claudia, as the host went away, found herself confronted by the young artist himself.

"What a surprise!" she exclaimed, rising, and taking his offered arm.

"To me it is a most pleasant one," rejoined Fane, flashing with unconcealed delight as he recognised the girl whose face had haunted him all day long.

"Well," Claudia observed, demurely, "our acquaintance is put upon a proper footing now that we have been introduced to each other, and I shall be able to bow to you when I meet you in future."

"And shouldn't you have been able to do so if the introduction had not taken place?" he asked, much amused at her reticence.

She shook her head in very positive negation.

"Oh, dear no! It would have been improper, and Mrs. Grundy would never have forgiven me."

"I think Mrs. Grundy the most hateful female on the face of the earth!" exclaimed the artist, with quite unnecessary vehemence.

"Do you? That is a bond of sympathy between us, then; for"—lowering her voice mysteriously—"I am always doing something to offend her. The fact is I generally say and do whatever comes into my head, and it is nearly always something I ought not to say or do. Isn't it a funny thing that forbidden pleasures are usually the sweetest?"

"Not funny at all. It is human nature."

By this time they were seated at the table, with its delicate exotics, its cut glass, and glittering silver, and Claudia was glancing round to see who was present. The conclusion she came to was that no other young man at the table was half as good-looking or half as pleasant as Fane himself; and having arrived at this decision, she turned to him again.

"Are you a friend of Mr. Thelby's?"

"Yes. I met him abroad last year, and was happy enough to render him some slight service, which he very much exaggerates. This morning, after leaving the plantation, I came upon him in the village, and he at once pressed me to dine with him this evening. For a long time I refused, but he overcame my scruples—for which, at the present moment, I feel deeply grateful to him"—added Lionel, with a glance at his companion.

"Don't you like dinners, then?"

"Not particularly."

"Ah! but you will when you grow older," said the girl, with a sage nod, whereat Fane began to laugh.

"What makes you think so?"

"All men do. Aunt Pauline says it is their nature to."

Fane laughed again, and the host, glancing in his direction, did not feel too well pleased as he saw the friendly relations that had so quickly been established between the two young people.

"And what about women?" queried the artist.

"They are different—at least most of them. For myself, the only part of the dinner I care for is the dessert."

"You like sweets, then?"

"I adore them."

"Naturally. Sweets to the sweet, you know."

Claudia looked at him with a certain amount of grave rebuke.

"I wish you had not said that."

"Why not?"

"Because it is the sort of thing anyone would say, and it seems as if I had expected it."

"I am very sorry"—contritely. "I did not intend a compliment."

"Oh!" returned Claudia, "I did not regard it in that light, but rather as a conventionalism. I like compliments"—candidly—"but I don't like conventionalisms at all."

She said this with a delicious little air of quaintness that Fane found irresistibly charming. Every moment the glamour she had thrown about him deepened, and the spell of her presence grew more potent.

He did not ask himself how it would end—how it must end. Delight visits us so seldom that we surely need not frighten it away when it comes by visions of a saddened future!

"When we—the ladies, I mean—are gone to the drawing-room, you must make friends with papa," said the young girl, presently; "and then you can ask him about the permission for your sketch being published. It is so much more satisfactory to talk than to write to people."

"Much more," rejoined Lionel, emphatically; and he took her advice, and contrived so well to ingratiate himself with the Baronet that the latter gave him an invitation to his house!

When the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room Fane immediately went up to Claudia, who was listlessly turning over the leaves of an album—without, however, paying much heed to its contents.

Her face lighted up into a charming smile as she greeted the young artist.

"Well!" she said, interrogatively.

"I have not only obtained Sir Everard's permission to publish the sketch of the park, but he has also invited me to come and see the picture-gallery to-morrow!"—triumphantly.

Claudia struck her hands softly together.

"That is capital! And are you coming?"

He looked at her with unconscious reproach.

"Can you ask such a question?"

"Well," said the girl, colouring slightly under his gaze, "I did not know whether you might not have another engagement."

"I am afraid if such had been the case it would have gone unfulfilled."

"Miss Brent," said Squire Thelby, approaching them at that moment, "will you sing for us? I am commissioned by my mother to tell you how much pleasure it will give us."

Claudia made a pretty little petulant gesture with her shoulders. She did not like her *sicte à sicte* being thus interrupted.

"Why don't you ask Lady Dynevor, Mr. Thelby? She sings ever so much better than I do."

"I don't know about that, but"—with emphasis—"I do know that I would rather hear you than anyone else in the room."

The girl rose with a little laugh.

"After that I can hardly refuse any longer, but I haven't brought my music, and I really don't think I can remember anything without it."

Almost beneath his breath, Fane murmured,—"Some Day!"

"Ah, yes," said Claudia, colouring ever so slightly. "Papa says it is a stupid, sentimental little song, but it is rather pretty all the same."

She had not a very powerful voice, but it was sweet and pathetic, and the simple little ditty she had selected—or rather that Fane had selected for her—suited it admirably.

A complete silence reigned in the room while she was singing, and Lionel's eyes never once left her profile, although his pleasure was somewhat marred by the sight of Thelby leaning over her while she sang.

"Perhaps," he said to himself, "it may come some day. Who knows?"

But what the "it" was we leave to the imagination of the reader.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning the sun, peeping in between the drawn blinds of the breakfast-room, shone on a very picturesque *tableau*, in the shape of Sir Everard and his sister, seated at the table, with its decorations of moss and primroses, and Claudia pouring out the coffee, and looking like some blooming young Hebe.

"I like your artist friend very much," observed the Baronet, laying down his newspaper, and addressing his daughter. "He is a clever, bright young fellow, and there is something in his face that seems curiously familiar to me. I can't tell who it is he reminds me of; perhaps I shall be able to do so when he comes to see the picture-gallery to-day."

"Who is coming to see the picture-gallery to-day?" sharply asked Miss Brent, who disapproved of anything going on in the house without her knowledge and consent.

"The young man who gave me the sketch yesterday, auntie dear," replied Claudia, dimpling into a mischievous smile.

"Nonsense, Claudia!"

"Indeed, auntie, it is true—isn't it, daddy?"

Miss Brent turned to her brother rather angrily.

"Why don't you correct this wild girl, Everard?"

"Because I don't see that she needs correction," said the Baronet, rather obstinately.

"Did she tell you of her meeting, and speaking to a perfect stranger in the plantation yesterday? And do you mean to tell me that was becoming conduct in a young lady of position?"

"There was no harm in it, so long as it was done innocently. Besides," he added, rather hurriedly, and perhaps feeling that he was likely to be worsted in the argument, "the young man was introduced to her at Thelby Hall last night, and he seems a very decent sort of young fellow indeed. I was much taken with him myself."

"And papa has asked him to luncheon," put in Claudia, who could not resist a certain amount of sly triumph over her aunt's discomfiture.

Miss Brent said nothing, and finished her breakfast in complete silence. She was trying to digest the very unpalatable truth that the sceptre of Brentwood was being transferred from her hands to those of Claudia, whose influence over her father grew stronger with each day that passed, and the knowledge was gall and wormwood to her arrogant nature.

For seventeen years she had been complete mistress over Brentwood, and her strong will had ever awayed her brother, whenever it had suited her purpose to exert it to the utmost. It was rather hard now to feel that her day was over, and that a younger and fairer woman reigned in her stead.

Claudia was restless that morning; she ran in and out of the garden and conservatories, gathering a flower here, a spray of fern there, and half-distracting the head-gardener, who, however, was too fond of her to complain.

"She's just like a flower herself," he would say, sometimes, "and she's sweeter than any flower that ever blossomed in the world!"

Which was the highest praise Andrew Johnson knew how to bestow.

When Fane arrived—which he did at the earliest moment he felt he could with decency appear—he found Claudia alone in the drawing-room, and she rose and greeted him with a certain demure dignity that became her infinitely.

"You haven't brought Rollo?" she said.

"No; I was afraid he would be in the way. I left him in charge of Mrs. Peters, my landlady, and I must say she undertook the charge very reluctantly, and only on condition that I would shut him inside my room and lock the door. She stands a good deal in awe of him, I think."

Claudia laughed.

"I am not surprised. He is so big, and Mrs. Peters is so little. I know her very well. She was my nurse when I was a tiny baby."

"So she tells me," returned Fane, but he did not add that he had hindered Mrs. Peters for a whole hour from her work that morning, for the purpose of making her talk of her former charge.

At this juncture the door opened, and Miss Brent came in, her eyes immediately falling on Lionel, who was standing just in front of the window, in such a position that the light fell fully on his face.

Pauline Brent was not a woman given to hysterics or fainting, but for a minute it certainly seemed as if she would succumb to one or the other, for she threw out her hands with a strange, almost tragic, gesture, and a low cry, half-stifled, escaped her lips.

"Who are you?" she cried, breathlessly, while a shiver shook her limbs.

Claudia came forward in surprise, and took her hands.

"This is Mr. Fane, auntie—the gentleman of whom I spoke to you this morning."

"Fane—Fane!" repeated Miss Brent, vacantly. Then she shook her head. "I do not know the name—I never heard it in my life before, but the face. Oh!"—shuddering—"I know that so well—so well!"

She sank down on a couch near, and covered her face with her hands, while Claudia looked on in deep surprise, shared also by Lionel himself.

A few minutes' reflection seemed to remind Miss Brent that her conduct was very strange, and she made a great effort to recover her self-possession.

"I must apologise," she said, getting up and shaking off Claudia's detaining hands, whilst she advanced nearer to the window, where Lionel was still standing, lost in astonishment at the effect of his presence; "but when I saw you reminded me very strongly of a dear friend who died many years ago, and for the moment I was quite unnerved. Now that I see you closer, I perceive my mistake—you are not so much like him as I fancied."

Fane bowed in some embarrassment, hardly knowing what to say, and all were relieved by the entrance of Sir Everard, who at once proposed an adjournment to the picture-gallery.

There are some days that stand out from the rest so vividly that we are apt to date after events from them, and almost to lose sight of what has gone before. Such an one was this to Lionel, and, perhaps, it may be added, to Claudia also, for not a cloud dimmed its sunshine, and she had that consciousness of a sympathetic presence which goes so far towards enjoyment.

After the picture-gallery had been gone through it was luncheon-time, and Lionel found himself seated beside Miss Brent, who seemed to have completely recovered from her morning's agitation, and was as charming to the young man as if he had been some old friend whom it pleased her to honour. Indeed, after the meal was over, she asked him to accompany her out on the terrace in order to show him the view, and although he would infinitely have preferred seeing it with Claudia he had no alternative but compliance.

Once out there, however, she paid little attention to the view, and Lionel had a curious idea that she was trying, in vulgar parlance, to "pump" him concerning his own affairs. She asked him how it was he had become an artist, where he went to school, and various other questions concerning his family, all of which he answered with perfect frankness.

"I am an orphan," he said, "and have been brought up by my grandmother. My mother died at my birth, and my father some six years later. I have only a faint remembrance of him, for even then I was living with my grandmother, and seldom saw him. He was drowned at sea, I believe, on his way to America."

"What is the name of the place where your grandmother lives?"

"Abbots Norton. It is in W—shire."

Miss Brent turned away so that he could not see her face, which had grown ghastly pale, and after a moment's pause he added, with a laugh,—

"I have very few relatives—none that I know of besides my grandmother, so I have my own way to make in the world."

"So far you have been successful?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, "pretty well. That is to say, I have had a couple of pictures hung on the line at the Academy for the last two years, and I sold them for a very fair price. I shall also be paid pretty well for my present commission, which, however, I accepted chiefly because it afforded me the excuse for a walking tour through one of the prettiest parts of England. But I fear I bore you—it cannot possibly interest you to hear the affairs of a perfect stranger like myself."

"Indeed," interrupting him, eagerly, "you make a great mistake, for I am extremely interested, and should like to hear any details you may care to tell me."

"There is nothing more to tell. My twenty-five years have been uneventful ones—more's the pity!"

"Don't say that!" she exclaimed with some

bitterness. "Lives that are the least eventful are always the happiest—I am sure of that."

Meanwhile Claudia, peeping from behind the curtains, turned to her father with a roguish smile.

"Daddy, Aunt Pauline is flirting most abominably with our artist, and it is not fair, considering how she went on about him at breakfast time."

"I suppose your Aunt Pauline is like the rest of her sex, my dear—not proof against a handsome face," responded the Baronet, drily.

"Is Mr. Fane handsome?" Claudia murmured, half to herself. "He is very nice, but I don't think I had thought about his good looks. Yes"—after a pause, during which she had regarded him intently from her cogen of vantage—"he might be the model for P. cibus, certainly, or any of the young Greek gods—his features are quite classical!"

"He's a clever young man too," pursued the Baronet; then, a minute after, he added, "I wonder whether he can paint portraits well. If so, I should not mind commissioning him to paint you."

"Oh, papa! Do you really mean it?"

"Certainly I do. I have often thought I should like to have your picture, but somehow—well, the opportunity has not occurred!"

The Baronet was one of those easy-going men who put things off as long as they can, and who rarely have the prudence to foresee difficulties before they occur.

He had taken a fancy to the young artist, and thought it would be pleasant to see a good deal of him, but the idea of this intercourse being dangerous for his daughter did not strike him.

Fane, when asked, modestly said he was sure he could not do justice to Miss Brent; nevertheless, he showed himself very anxious to undertake the task, and it was arranged that she should give him sittings every morning.

The rest of the afternoon was spent in loitering about the sunny lawns, and sitting in the shadow of the trees, and for the most of the time Claudia was left to entertain the visitor, for Miss Brent had retired to her own room, and Sir Everard was in his study—supposed to be deep in accounts, but really enjoying an afternoon nap!

And so the golden hours went by, and—

"Love took up the harp of life, smote on all the chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight!"

CHAPTER IV.

At the end of a week Claudia's picture had made very considerable progress, for Lionel was a swift worker, and in this instance the task was a labour of love.

Miss Brent was usually in the room to play propriety during the sittings; but it often happened that the two young people met each other in the park, or found the opportunity for occasional *à tête à tête*, and it was no wonder that in the hearts of each a love had grown up which, though unconfessed so far as Claudia was concerned, had already made a difference in the young girl, taking her in a single leap from childhood to womanhood.

She had grown quieter and less playful than she used to be, and would often fall into reveries, the subject of which it was not difficult to guess from the smile that played round her lips.

One evening, when he was sitting alone in his little lodgings—alone, that is to say, save for the presence of Rollo, who was lying in front of the window, and taking up nearly the whole width of the room—Lionel took himself seriously to task, and looked his position fully in the face.

He was quite aware that he was passionately in love with the fair young girl whose blue eyes had taken captive his senses the first time they glanced into his, and he was also aware of the hopelessness of such a love.

How could he expect it possible that he should win her—be, a penniless, struggling artist, with only his brains to depend upon, and she, the only daughter and heiress of a rich Baronet!

The idea was absurd, and Fane was sufficient man of the world to know that, kind as Sir Everard always was to him, he would laugh him to scorn if he appeared in the character of a suitor for his daughter.

No; the only thing for him to do was to go away, and strive to forget her, although he knew that, however much he might strive, his efforts would be unsuccessful, for she had become so entwined with the very fibres of his heart that nothing but death could ever tear her memory from it.

Still, to go away would be the most honourable course of action he could pursue, and the young man cursed his own folly for having stayed so long; but the temptation had been so great, and his pleasure in her society so entralling, that prudence had been forgotten.

The entrance of Mrs. Peters with his supper-tray broke in suddenly on his meditations.

"Lor', sir! Why, you be all in-darkness, just for all the world like an owl!" observed the little woman, bustling about to light the lamp. "For my part, I can't bear to sit in the twilight thinking, for it always makes me feel that miserable I don't know what to do!"

Lionel smiled, and was of opinion that, in this particular instance, thinking had had the same effect upon him.

He had grown to like his little landlady, perhaps because she was so fond of talking of Claudia as he was of listening.

"And how's the picture getting on?" inquired Mrs. Peters, alluding to Claudia's portrait, in which she took a very vivid interest.

"It has progressed very rapidly—so rapidly, that I think to-morrow will be the last sitting," he returned, rather sadly.

"Do you mean it will be finished?"

"No, not quite that; but I shall not require Miss Brent to sit to me any longer. I shall take the painting up to my studio in London, and finish it there."

"I should think Miss Claudia'll make a lovely picture," observed Mrs. Peters (who was always ready for a bit of gossip). "She's pretty enough for a waxwork—and so was her mother, poor lady!"

This was the first time the landlady had ever spoken of the late Lady Brent, and Lionel said, with some interest,—

"Is Miss Brent like her mother?"

"The very image of her, she is. But I hope she'll have a very different fate."

"Was Lady Brent unhappy, then?"

"No, certainly not. In fact, I should think she was as happy as she could possibly be, barring the fact of having to live with her sister-in-law. It's a mistake, living with your husband's relations after you are married, and so I always said," added Mrs. Peters, with a wise shake of the head. "Miss Pauline had been mistress so long that she didn't like giving it up to her brother's new wife, who was little more than a child at the time of her marriage, and I daresay there used to be quarrels between them. In fact, I know there was; for Miss Pauline has a frightfully violent temper, and sometimes it used to break out beyond her control. Barring that, though, I should think Lady Brent was very happy, for her husband worshipped the very ground she trod on, and she was a sweet-tempered woman herself."

"What did you mean, then, by saying you hoped her daughter would have a different fate?"

Mrs. Peters hesitated a moment, then closed the door, as if in fear of eavesdroppers.

"Well, sir, I spoke without thinking. It's a subject as we don't talk about, because Sir Everard likes it to be kept as quiet as possible, and has done all he could to prevent it reaching Miss Claudia's ears. What I meant to say was, I hoped Miss Claudia wouldn't be murdered like her poor mother was."

"Murdered?"

"Yes, sir. It can't matter, me speaking of it to you, seeing as how you are a stranger, and will go up to London, and forget all about it, but we don't mention it in the village."

"But who murdered her?" asked Lionel, deeply interested in this past tragedy.

"Well, sir, it was a friend of Sir Everard's, who was staying in the house—a Mr. Moreland, and he was engaged to be married to Miss Pauline. Poor thing! It spoils her life, too, for she's never been the same since. Lady Brent was stabbed with a Moorish dagger that was kept in her boudoir as a paper-knife, and she died directly, without so much as a moan."

"And what became of the man?"

"He was arrested at once, and taken to the county gaol, and there he died the very next day. The doctors said he had heart disease, and that it was the excitement that killed him, but my opinion is as it was a judgment from Heaven."

"There was no doubt of his guilt, then?"

"None whatever. Why, he was found in the room—Lady Brent's boudoir it was—with the dagger in his hand, and blood on his clothes; besides, he confessed that he was the murderer, although he wouldn't say why he had committed the crime. We all knew he didn't like my lady, and she didn't like him, and it seems she had done her best to break off his engagement with Miss Pauline, and there had been quarrels between the two in consequence. Poor Sir Everard! I never saw a man cut up as he was. He went abroad for five years—him and his sister, and the baby. Miss Claudia knows nothing about it to this day, and it is to be hoped she never will."

"How quiet you are, Mr. Fane!" exclaimed Claudia, the next morning, after the sitting was over, and the young artist was putting up his brushes, "you have hardly spoken a word since you came!"

Lionel, in some confusion, muttered something about a headache; and Miss Brent, who had been seated in the window recess, working at her knitting, came forward, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Yes," she said, looking into his face, "you are pale, and your eyes are heavy. Let me give you a dose of sal volatile; it will do you good," and before the young man could remonstrate she had left the room, in search of the promised draught.

"Your aunt is very kind to me," murmured Lionel, after she had gone.

"Yes," returned Claudia, "you are a favourite of hers, and let me tell you, it is a distinction enjoyed by very few people indeed, so you ought to appreciate it."

"I do. You have all been very kind—Miss Brent, Sir Everard, and yourself. It will make going away all the harder."

"Going away!" faltered Claudia, and the pretty rose-bloom left her cheek as she spoke.

"Are you thinking of going away, then?"

"I must. Business," he turned away so as not to meet her gaze while he said it, "calls me back to town immediately. I need not say how much I shall regret saying 'good-bye' to Brentwood."

Claudia made no reply. She was looking very intently at her picture, but with eyes that saw nothing through a mist of unshed tears.

"I have brought some eau de Cologne as well," said Miss Brent, returning; and then, in spite of Lionel's remonstrance, she made him drink the dose, and sit down on the couch while she bathed his brow with the scent.

"There! Does not that cool you?"

"It is delicious!" he rejoined, gratefully, and as he spoke he raised her hand to his lips. "You bring back to me visions of the mother I never knew."

There seemed to be something in the words that agitated her, for she rose quickly, letting fall the bottle of Cologne water, which was split over the floor.

"I believe I am growing nervous in my old age," she said, with an awkward laugh, to cover her confusion; "and as it will be sure to increase with years I have not a very pleasing prospect before me, have I?"

"Auntie," said Claudia, abruptly, "Mr. Fane is going away—at once."

Miss Brent was silent for a moment, then she turned to him, saying quickly,—

"Oh, no! you must not think of such a thing. We cannot spare you."

"You are very good, but, unfortunately, I am compelled to leave," he muttered, confusedly, hardly knowing what excuse to make for his sudden determination, and quite incapable of understanding the wistful look cast upon him by Pauline Brent.

"Then, if you go, you must give us your address," she said, "for now that we know you, it will not do for us to lose sight of you altogether."

He willingly complied with this request, and presently they all went out on the lawn, in search of Sir Everard, who was supposed to be in one of the greenhouses.

"I will fetch papa," observed Claudia, who, as a matter of fact, really wanted an excuse for getting away in order to shed a few tears which, in spite of her endeavours, would keep coming into her eyes.

"Very well; we will wait for him under the copper beech," said her aunt, leading the way to a rustic bench, and motioning Lionel to a seat by her side.

"Mr. Fane," she said, very earnestly, when they were alone, "I want to say a few words to you before you go, and although you may be surprised to hear them from the lips of a stranger, I hope you will not attribute them to any but the true motive, which is a deep interest in you and your future."

She paused and drew a long breath, while the young man, albeit grateful, was assuredly astonished.

"From what you have said"—she spoke more slowly now, and with a certain amount of embarrassment—"I have deduced the idea that you are not very well off now. I want you to look upon me as a friend, and to let me help you pecuniarily."

"My dear Miss Brent, you are very good, but really I am in no want of pecuniary aid," answered the young man, flushing a deep crimson all over his face. "Still, I am grateful for your kindness all the same."

"And yet you will not let me aid you?"

"I assure you I am in no need of help at the present moment. I am not a rich man by any manner of means, yet on the other hand, I make enough by my paintings to keep me in comfort, if not luxury."

"Still, you may require money by-and-by?"

"In that case I might take advantage of your generosity: at present I could not conscientiously do so," returned the young man firmly.

Miss Brent sighed, and looked disappointed.

"You have not misunderstood my meaning—you believe that I wish to be your friend?" she said, eagerly.

"Certainly, and, as I said before, I am very grateful. I do not know what I have done to deserve your kindness."

"You are like someone I once knew—so like—so like!" she murmured, half to herself; and then, as if overcome by some great agitation, she got up, and went into the house, leaving Lionel more astonished than he had ever been in his life.

He could not understand her. She was a mystery which it was beyond his power to solve. That she had a friendly feeling for him he did not doubt, but it must have been a very strong friendship indeed which had induced her to lay her purse at his disposal so soon after knowing him.

"I can't find papa anywhere," said Claudia, returning. "Why"—stopping short—"where is auntie?"

"She has gone indoors."

There was an awkward pause. Claudia stood quite still, with her slim, white fingers interlaced one in the other, and her eyes downcast, while the flickering shadows fell on her sun-bright hair, and on the long, curly lashes fringing her drooping lids.

Lionel rose hurriedly. He felt that if he stayed there, and looked at her any longer, all considerations of prudence would be forgotten, and his love would rush tumultuously from his lips.

"I think I will go back home now, and pack

up my few effects," he observed. "I intend leaving by the evening train, but I will come in this afternoon, if I may, and say adieu to Sir Everard, and make arrangements for your picture to be sent up to my studio. Good-bye."

He held out his hand, and she put hers into it.

Lionel looked up, and there, coursing slowly down her cheeks, were two tears.

Claudia was very young, it must be remembered, and had not yet learnt the lesson of disguising her feelings. She did try—very hard indeed—to prevent those tears from falling, but it was in vain.

"Are you sorry I am going? Do you really regret it?" asked Lionel, catching his breath sharply, and not losing her hand.

The girl made no verbal reply, only lifted her eyes and looked at him; but in that glance Fane read the secret of which she herself was unaware, and in another moment his arms were round her, his kisses were on her lips, and he was telling her passionately how much he loved her—how miserable a life would be to him without her; while she, with shy delight, yielded herself to his caresses, knowing that she had, indeed, met her fate!

CHAPTER V.

"AND you were really going away because you loved me?" she said to him presently, when both had grown calmer, and were seated on the rustic bench, concealed from view by the friendly shade of the boughs.

"It was the best thing for me to do. How could I hope to win you—poor, nameless, as I am?"

She put her hand against his lips with a pretty little imperious gesture.

"You must not talk like that! What do you suppose I care for wealth or fame? It is you I love—your very self, and all the wealth of the world could not make you dearer!"

He covered the delicate hand with kisses.

"I know that, my darling, but what will your father say to me?"

Claudia's smile faded, but only for a moment.

"He may not like it at first," she said, candidly, "but when he sees that I should be miserable if he did not give his consent, he will come round all right. Dear old daddy! his only thought is for my happiness!"

Lionel could not feel equally certain, but was quite willing to be hopeful.

"I shall work so hard now that I have the thought of you to spur me on!" he said, fondly. "I feel capable of doing all sorts of great things—of painting a picture which shall challenge the admiration of the world, and then coming and laying my laurels at your feet!"

Life seemed very golden to those two, in the first delight of love and youth, as they sat together under the dancing shadow of the leaves, weaving a joyous future from their own fancies, and recking little of the dark shadow that was so soon to fall upon them.

Sir Everard—who, instead of being in the greenhouses, had gone to the village—caught a glimpse of them as he walked up the gravelled path, and came to a full stop, as if with the intention of disturbing their *à tête*, then seemed to alter his mind, and went swiftly into his study, where he was almost immediately joined by his sister.

She paused on the threshold, and looked at her brother in astonishment—as well she might, for his face was pale and drawn, and he seemed to be the prey of some great anxiety.

"What is the matter, Everard? Are you ill?"

"No, but I am very much worried," he answered, passing his hand wearily across his brow. "I met Thelby in the village, and we got talking of this young artist, Lionel Fane. Do you know who he is?"

It was now Miss Brent's turn to look pale, and her eyes fell under her brother's gaze.

"I suspect—" she murmured, in a low voice.

"Then why did you not tell me?" he cried, sternly. "Why did you permit me to have him under my roof—to welcome him as a friend, when in this very house his father stained his soul with my wife's life-blood?"

"He did not!" exclaimed Pauline, vehemently. "I have told you over and over again that he was innocent!"

"You have told me!" repeated the Baronet, with deep scorn. "And what do you think your faith in him is worth, when he was taken red-handed from his awful crime, and with the weapon still in his grasp? He did not deny it himself, and if he had lived he would have been hanged for his crime. You believe in him because he was your lover, and I suppose it is for that reason you have welcomed his son; but you have been wrong, Pauline—more than wrong, indeed, for you have betrayed my confidence, and I cannot readily forgive you!"

She covered her face with her hands, and remained silent, while the Baronet rang the bell.

"Go out on the lawn, and tell Mr. Fane I wish to speak to him," he said to the servant who answered his summons, and as he spoke Miss Brent looked up in quick alarm.

"You are not going to tell him the whole miserable story?" she exclaimed, with agonized entreaty. "He himself knows nothing of his father's identity, does not even know that he bears a false name! If you let him hear the truth, you will spoil the whole of his life."

"Are you sure that he is ignorant?"

"Quite—quite sure! I have questioned him closely, with a view to discovery."

"Then," said Sir Everard, "I shall tell him nothing more than that he must not come here again. I will pay him for Claudia's picture as though it were finished, and our intercourse must finally cease."

"How did Mr. Thelby learn who he was?" asked Pauline, still profoundly agitated.

"Through his family lawyer, who, it seems, pays Fane's grandmother an annuity. Thelby was speaking of Fane, who saved his life once, and then Stevens told him the truth, chiefly because he had heard that the artist visited me, and he thought it was not right I should remain in ignorance. I met Thelby on his way up the village to seek me."

There was no time to say more, for the artist himself stood at the door, and as a sign from her brother Miss Brent left the room, weeping bitterly.

Now that he was really face to face with his guest, Sir Everard felt the difficulty of his task, and paused, hardly knowing how to begin.

Eventually it was Lionel who spoke first.

"I was on the point of seeking you, Sir Everard, to tell you that I love your daughter, and to ask you whether you would permit me to declare myself her suitor," he said, coming to the point with straightforward directness. "I know that I am not rich, and that from a worldly point of view I am most ineligible, but I love her with all my heart, and if you will only give me hope I will prove myself worthy of her. I will compel fame and fortune to come to me!"

He spoke in an open, manly way that, in any one else, would have challenged the Baronet's admiration.

Without attempting to conceal his knowledge of the presumption he showed in making love to an heiress, he yet, by virtue of his talent, and the love he bore her, ventured to approach Sir Everard on equal terms, although with a certain humility that was in itself half pride.

"You love my daughter—you wish to marry her!" exclaimed the Baronet, absolutely dumfounded by the request. "Do you mean to say you have told her this?"

"I have, sir, and she responds to my affection, and has promised to marry me, subject to your approval."

"Which you will never get! This is folly—madness. Put all such ideas out of your head once and for all. A union between you and Miss Brent is an impossibility."

"Pardon me," said the young man, firmly, but with deep respect. "Love itself levels all things, and by virtue of it I claim that you have no right to forbid our marriage. We love

each other, and are willing to wait until I have achieved some sort of position by my paintings, but"—he drew himself to his full height, and his eyes flashed—"I will never give her up—never—never!"

He spoke with such force and emphasis that Sir Evarard was startled. In what a terrible position had he placed his daughter by admitting to his hospitality a stranger of whom he knew nothing!

"I tell you, Mr. Fane, that you can never be anything to Claudia—not even a friend," he said, in a voice that had grown hoarse with anxiety. "It is not a question of money or position—that I could waive in consideration of her happiness, but a gulf lies between you that can never be bridged over—that nothing can span, and it is for this reason you must go away at once, and promise never to approach Claudia again."

It was now the young man's turn to look startled, for there was an earnestness in the Baronet's manner which convinced him he did not speak without adequate reason.

"What is this gulf?" he asked.

"I would rather not tell it to you—indeed, it is much better you should not know."

"But I must know, Sir Evarard!" cried Lionel, insistently. "You cannot expect me to take anyone's opinion save my own on so momentous a question!"

"I warn you it is for your happiness to remain in ignorance."

"I care not! Unless I recognise the reason of which you speak, nothing shall induce me to give up Claudia!"

"Then," said the Baronet, "since you will have it so, I will tell you the truth. Your father murdered my wife!"

The young man staggered back as if he had been shot. At first he hardly comprehended the meaning of the words.

"It is not true—it cannot be true!" he cried, hoarsely.

"It is as true as Heaven. He was a widower with one child when he came to stay with me, and after his death that child was taken to by his mother, who changed her name, and went to live in a secluded village, where she was not likely to be recognised as the mother of a murderer. Do you think," said Sir Evarard, pitifully (for the anguish on the young man's face touched him to the heart)—"do you think I would tell you a lie on such a subject? If so, you wrong me deeply."

Lionel was silent for a few moments, while his memory travelled back to his childhood, to his grandmother's ever-present sadness, to the reluctance she had always manifested in speaking of his father, and to the fact that she never alluded to either friends or relations.

Could this be the reason?

He groaned aloud, and hid his face in his hands, and Sir Evarard added kindly,—

"Come, come, don't give way. Be a man, and look your trouble bravely in the face. It is very terrible, I admit, but you are not the first who has had to suffer for another's sin. Think of my agony when I saw my young wife lying dead—murdered under my very roof, and for no motive that we could ever discover! I would have spared you if I could, but you would not let me."

"No," said Lionel, "it is better for me to know the truth—if truth it be. But why did you let me come here if you knew this?"

"I did not know it—I only heard it this morning, or you may be sure I should have acted differently. My knowledge came through Stevens, the collector, at W—"

Lionel started.

"Yes," he muttered, "I was aware my grandmother knew Stevens, for he collects some rents and sends them to her every quarter."

He remained silent for a few minutes, then started up impetuously.

"I cannot bear this suspense. I will go without delay to my grandmother herself, and if she says this accusation is not true, I will come back and claim Claudia in spite of all the world! If it is true—"

"Well!"

"Then," said Lionel, in a despairing voice, "I must give her up, and never see her again!"

An hour afterwards he was in the train, speeding rapidly towards the obscure little village where his childhood had been passed, and almost driven mad by conflicting emotions. How the time passed he never afterwards knew, for he seemed to be in a sort of dream that recked of nothing save its own misery.

Station after station was passed, but he did not look up until they reached his destination, and then he sprang out of the carriage; and without taking any notice of the porters who greeted him, and with whom he used to be on such friendly terms, he strode hastily along the high road, thinking how much changed his life was since last he trod that road.

He had not seen Claudia since his parting with her under the copper beech, for she had gone to her room immediately, there to ponder over her new-found happiness.

Miss Brent had met him in the corridor, but, reckless of politeness, he had not stayed to speak to her, so anxious was he to get to the station, and so little inclined for the common amenities of life.

At last he arrived at Dale Cottage—a pretty little house, half-smothered in roses, standing back from the road in a large garden, and bearing on its white-curtained windows and brightly-pollished knocker signs of the scrupulous care expended upon its cleanliness.

In this tiny, flower-scented parlour an old woman of between sixty and seventy was at work knitting a sock, which she dropped as she saw her visitor, and came forward with outstretched arms.

"Lionel, my dear boy! This is, indeed, a pleasant surprise!"

He kissed her affectionately, and then for the first time she noticed his changed appearance.

"Are you ill, my boy?" she asked, anxiously.

"Ill in mind, but not in body. Grandmother," he put his hands on her shoulders, and looked down into her eyes. "I have been talking to Sir Evarard Brent, and he—"

A little gasping sigh escaped her lips, and the young man felt her form tremble in his grasp.

"Sir Evarard Brent!" she repeated, in a suffocated voice. "Why—oh, why did you go there?"

"You know him, then?"

She bent her head without replying—indeed, she seemed too agitated to speak, and her manner confirmed Fane's worst fears.

"Is it true that my father murdered Sir Evarard's wife?" he asked, determined to hear the truth without delay.

The old lady did not reply.

"Answer me, grandmother—for pity's sake. This suspense is killing me! Only say 'Yes,' or 'No!'" he cried, his pain becoming intolerable.

As the reply came, he threw out his arms with a wild gesture of despairing appeal, for it was—

"Yes!"

CHAPTER VI.

ALL that afternoon Claudia spent in her room, for, strange to say, Sir Evarard was locked up in his study, and Miss Brent had declined coming downstairs. The young girl felt a little surprised that Lionel should have left without seeing her, and could only suppose her father's answer had been unfavourable; but she was prevented by a very natural shyness from seeking Sir Evarard, and it was only when the whole of the afternoon had passed away, and five o'clock came, that she at length entered the study.

Her father was sitting at the table, with his head resting on his hands, and his attitude full of despondency.

"Daddy, dear!"

He looked up and held out his arms, and in another moment she was kneeling at his side.

"Daddy, dear, what did you say to Mr. Fane?" she whispered, almost below her breath.

"My darling, I told him it was impossible that you could marry him. Rush! do not in-

terrupt me until you have heard what I have to say. It is not only that he is below you in rank, and is poor, that I have come to this decision, for another and much more powerful reason exists, and he himself is ready to acknowledge it!"

The young girl had risen to her feet, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling.

"Papa, nothing shall part us—if he is only true to me! I will wait years, if need be, but I will never marry anyone else."

The Baronet shook his head sadly.

"It is Fate, my dear, that will part you. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children even unto the third generation, and the shadow of a crime lies between you, and will prevent your ever being anything to each other save strangers."

"What do you mean?" she said, impatiently, "you are speaking riddles."

"Claudia!" said Sir Evarard, answering her question by another, "have I not always been a kind and affectionate father to you? Have I not given you your heart's desire whenever it lay in my power to do so?"

"You have indeed, papa. You have been the best and dearest of fathers always."

"Then can you not trust me now, and believe that I am acting for your good, and have your truest interests at heart? Doubtless Fane himself will write to you, and tell you he gives you up; and mind you, Claudia, it will be of his own free will, and not because I have made any effort to persuade him. One thing I exact from your love, and it is that you shall not try to discover the barrier which severs you, for the knowledge could not possibly do you any good, and would certainly pain you. My dear"—his tone became very tender as he kissed her brow—

"I would willingly bear your trouble for you if it were possible, but remember we all have to suffer, old and young."

She left the study in a sort of bewildered dream. Poor Claudia! whose path had hitherto been strewn with rose-leaves. The thorns were pressing in her flesh for the first time, and her trouble was none the less heavy to be borne because there was a vague intangibility about it, whose origin she could not even guess.

Surely there must be some mistake, which the morning would clear up! Fate could never be cruel enough to part her from her lover, while his first kisses still lingered on her lips—his first love vows still echoed in her ears!

"Some day we shall be happy," she murmured to herself, and then, as while away the time, she tried to sing the song she had been humming when she met him first, but broke down ignominiously into a flood of tears!

Alas! the next day brought no Lionel, and the hours seemed to drag as wearily as if they were weighted with lead. By the evening post came a letter, and after glancing at the writing she ran into the window-recess, where the curtains hid her from view, and there she eagerly tore open the envelope, and read the enclosure, which ran thus:—

"I write to wish you an eternal good-bye, Claudia, for in all human probability we shall never meet again—and it is better so, since nothing but misery could come of our meeting. I give you back the promise you gave me, and try to hope you will marry some good man, who will make you happy. Least you should think your father has had anything to do with this decision on my part, I tell you that even if he were to beg me to marry you I could not do it, for there is a chasm between us which no endeavours can open. Farewell!"

"LIONEL FANE."

A month later Claudia was presented at Court, and found herself in the vortex of fashionable society, where her beauty, and the fact of being her father's heiress, made her one of the successes of the season.

Sir Evarard had come to the conclusion that the best way to make her forget Fane would be to take her away from Brentwood, where at every turn she was reminded of him, and to

throw her into the gaiety of London fashion, in the hope that some other lover might take his place in her heart.

Miss Brent quite agreed in this view, and came up to town herself in order to chaperone her niece and see her triumphs. Strange to say, since reading Lionel's letter, Claudia had never once alluded to him, and—much to her father's relief—had asked no questions concerning the reason that parted them.

As a matter of fact, the letter had been so positive, so hopeless, in its tone, that the young girl had recognised the futility of rebelling against its decision—and very likely pride came to her aid, and helped her to bear her pain in silence.

Still, it had changed her. She was no longer the bright, insouciant girl, with her half-childish gaiety, that had wandered in the wood in search of primroses. A sense of the pain and mystery of life had come upon her, and its influence would always remain with her.

She said nothing when Sir Everard suggested going to London, but submitted with quiet obedience, and made no objection to being presented at the next drawing-room; though, when it came to taking an interest in her dress, she was found quite lacking, and not all her aunt's endeavours could make her treat the subject otherwise than indifferently.

It was the same with the lovers that presently gathered round her, beseeching her smiles. She created them all alike, with a certain icy friendliness that was little better than indifference itself; and towards the end of the season, when an Earl's coronet was laid at her feet, she rejected it as carelessly as if coronets grew on blackberry bushes.

"I think you are wrong, Claudia," her aunt told her, as they sat together in the morning-room in Park Lane. "You will never have such another offer."

Claudia smiled, half scornfully, half-sadly.

"I hope not, Aunt Pauline, for I shall never marry."

"Nonsense, my dear!"

"It is true," quietly. "If it were not for papa and you, I should just go into a sisterhood, and devote my life to labouring among the poor."

"My dear child, what a notion! And you not yet nineteen!"

Claudia made no reply, and her aunt looked at her wistfully, keenly conscious of the pale face, heavy eyes, and expression of sadness that had now become habitual to the girl.

Miss Brent's behaviour towards her niece had changed very much of late. She had grown much more affectionate, and had taken the deepest interest in all the young girl did. Her heart smote her strangely as she observed the change these few months had made in her appearance.

"Have you not yet forgotten Mr. Fane," she asked, softly.

"I shall never forget him, auntie dear. My love was not given for a week or a day, but for ever and ever; and though we are parted, I feel that it is through no fault of his, and that, in spite of all, he is quite worthy of my affection. It will all come right some day," she said, more to herself than her companion. "Perhaps it may not be on earth, but there is a world beyond, and then—"

She concluded her sentence by a smile, and her aunt turned abruptly away, as if the words hurt her in some way.

That same night they went to a ball, for Claudia made no objection to going out. Indeed, she seemed ready to do anything her father wished, although she never showed any symptoms of enjoyment, such as would have been supposed natural to her age and position.

Miss Brent accompanied her, and the brilliant scene was one that certainly might have raised enthusiasm in any heart which the frost of age had not chilled. The flowers, the lights, the flashing jewels, the delicate scents, the soft, dreamy music, all made up a fairy land whose effect was rendered more charming by the musical sound of falling waters in the conservatory, where the fountains were playing in their marble basins,

amongst the broad, green, lily leaves floating on the surface.

Claudia had taken refuge from the heat under a huge tropical palm, and her cavalier was none other than George Thelby, who had followed the Brents up from W—shire in the hope that he might induce the young girl to become his wife.

"The place looks pretty from here, does it not?" he said, as he fanned Claudia with a white awn-down fan that he had taken from her unwilling hand. "Those coloured lights have a very charming effect, but they ought not to be hung so low, for if one brushed against them they might fall, and then the consequences would assuredly be disagreeable!"

Claudia assented mechanically, without, however, looking to see whether the young man's fears were well-founded—as was, in effect the case, for the Chinese and other lanterns hung amidst the foliage were of necessity so lightly suspended that a mere touch would knock them off the branches.

Presently the band struck up a waltz, and Thelby rose, saying,—

"Shall I take you back into the ball-room?"

Claudia shook her head.

"No, thank you. I have kept this dance free, and I would much rather sit it out here than in the ball-room. But don't let me keep you—no doubt you are engaged!"

Thelby reluctantly admitted this to be the case, and wished it had been otherwise, seeing that he would have infinitely preferred staying with her to dancing with his promised partner.

However, courtesy forced him to go, and Claudia breathed a little sigh of relief as she found herself alone.

She remained for some time in a sort of dreamy reverie, listening to the rhythmic cadences of the waltz music, and wondering whether any other heart in the room was as heavy as hers, when she became aware of footsteps approaching, and looking up saw her aunt Pauline advancing towards her.

At that moment, the lace on Miss Brent's dress caught in a prickly cactus, and she turned sharply round to disengage it, and in so doing, the very accident of which Thelby had spoken took place, for one of the lamps fell to the ground, and before even Claudia saw what had happened her aunt's light dress was in flames!

CHAPTER VII.

MISS BRENT was carried home in an unconscious state, and as soon as she was laid on the bed the doctors, who had been hastily summoned, examined her, and told Sir Everard that although she was badly burned they were not yet in a position to state the full extent of her injuries.

Evidently they entertained very little hopes of her ultimate recovery, for their eyes and voices were very grave as they gave their report.

Both Claudia and her father sat up with the sufferer, but it was not until morning that she opened her eyes and spoke.

Strange to say, she had a full recollection of all that had happened, and was quite aware of her own precarious condition.

"Don't look at me so sadly, Claudia," she whispered, with a faint smile, as the young girl moistened her parched lips. "It is better that it should be I than you. My life is well-nigh over, yours is all to come. I am quite willing to die."

"Don't talk about dying, auntie, dear," said the girl, in a stifled voice. "You will get better—"

"I don't think so, dear; in fact, I feel sure of it. Everard!"—her brother came to her side—

"I want you to do me a great favour. Let Lionel Fane be sent for without delay."

The Baronet started violently, and did not reply.

"I have a reason for wishing his presence, and if you hesitate it will soon be too late," urged his sister. "This may be a dying request, surely you will grant it?"

"What good can his coming do?" muttered the Baronet, with an uneasy glance at his daughter, who had turned very pale.

"It will do good; besides, it is my urgent desire," said Miss Brent, in low, but insistent tones. "Remember—he is innocent—personally, he has done you no wrong."

Sir Everard was sorely tempted to refuse her request, but finally his good nature and the thought of her condition overcame him, and he yielded to her entreaties, and sent a telegram to the young artist's studio, asking his immediate presence, and giving his reason for doing so.

All that day Pauline Brent lay perfectly still on her bed, apparently lost in thought, save when the pain of her burns wrung from her a deep groan, or the hospital nurse came to dress them.

Her face was uninjured, and Claudia was struck anew by its beauty, as it lay on the pillow, the rich dark fringes of her closed lids lying heavily on her cheeks, and her statueque lips closed with an expression of patient resolve in their firm, clear-cut lines.

Once Claudia spoke to her of Lionel.

"Perhaps," she said, and her voice trembled, "he will be out of town."

"I don't know," replied Pauline, quietly, "but I feel that I shall see him soon, whether he is or not."

Her presentment was fulfilled, for at a little after nine o'clock Fane made his appearance, and was brought in the room by Sir Everard himself.

"Had I not better go?" whispered Claudia, deeply agitated, but the invalid's hand closed tightly over her own.

"No. It is necessary you should stay."

The young artist looked pale and thin, as the subdued light of the hanging lamp fell on his face, and his lips trembled a little under the heavy moustache when he saw Claudia, but he advanced at once to the side of the bed, and took the hand Miss Brent extended to him.

"I should have obeyed your summons before, but the telegram had to be forwarded on to Devonshire, where I was staying, and it has taken me all day to get up to town," he said.

"You are in time," she murmured, her eyes resting on his face with a sort of satisfaction. "I knew I should see you before I died."

She paused a moment, and if an uninterested spectator had been present he could not have failed to be struck with the group. Sir Everard, tall and stately, and at the present moment pensive-looking, Claudia with downcast eyes and fluttering colour, Lionel gravely serious, kneeling at the side of the bed, and still holding Miss Brent's hand in his clasp.

"The Bible tells us that it is never too late to repent," said the sick woman, presently, "and if that is true there may yet be time for me to make my peace with Heaven, even though it be the eleventh hour. I am about to confess a great crime which has lain on my conscience for many years. Come nearer, Everard, for it concerns you as nearly as anyone."

The Baronet took up his position at the foot of the bed, and it was to him that his sister afterwards chiefly addressed herself.

"Do you remember when you first brought your young wife to Brentwood, and installed her there as mistress of the house where I had reigned for ten years—ever since I was fifteen?" she said, and it was a curious fact that as she proceeded her voice grew stronger.

"You told me you hoped we should be friends, but I knew quite well, from the first moment of our meeting, that such a hope was futile, for there were conflicting elements in each, and antagonism was bound to be the result. We kept up a semblance of friendship for twelve months or so, but it was only an armed neutrality, liable at any moment to break out into active warfare. Well, some time after your marriage one of your college friends came to visit you—Ernest Moreland. Lionel started violently as she mentioned the name, but, without taking any notice, she went on,—

"He was quite young, although he was a widower with one child, and he fell in love with me—passionately in love with me. We were engaged, although you gave your consent very

reluctantly, for Moreland was poor, and had no profession beyond a sort of dilapidated literary taste, which brought him in a small income through his writings. Between him and Lady Brent there was no love lost, and she many times remonstrated with me for my foolishness in engaging myself to him, when I had the chance of so much better offers.

"One day, I went to her boudoir to complain of some alteration that had been made in my room without my being consulted. I daresay I was in the wrong, and I know I spoke passionately and angrily, for I was very much incensed and amongst other taunts I flung at her was the one that her rank had been considerably below that of my brother, and that she had married him for the sake of his money, and was presuming on her position. At this her temper rose, and she retorted angrily that if the brother had made a *misalliance* the sister was about following suit!

"Well, I suppose I was maddened by this allusion to my lover, and I took up a dagger that was lying on one of the tables, and declared if she dared say that again I would stab her. She was so coward, and she instantly repeated it, adding something even blither, upon which I carried my threat into execution!"

A simultaneous cry of horror rose from her three listeners, and her own brows contracted as if with the agony of remembrance, but she proceeded in a perfectly firm voice,—

"The moment I had committed the deed repentance came, and my first impulse was to give myself up, but as I went towards the bell Moreland himself entered. It seems he had heard Lady Brent's groan as he was walking along the passage, and fancying something must be the matter had opened the door.

"I suppose the moment he saw me with the dagger in my hand he comprehended the situation, for he took the knife from me and instantly commanded me to go to my room—which command I obeyed; and it seems directly after I left, you, Everard, came in, and finding Ernest holding the knife, the blood from which had dripped on his clothes, ordered his arrest, and he was taken to prison.

"I did not know this, for I was in a raging hysteria during the whole of the night, and these hysterics were naturally attributed to my horror at my sister-in-law's murder by Moreland. I was never once suspected. At last the doctor gave me a draught which sent me into an artificial sleep, and the first news that I heard the next morning was that Moreland had died in gaol of heart disease.

"Then it was that the idea of keeping my secret struck me, for since he was dead my confession could do him no good, and I found myself clinging to life with a desperation that I cannot now understand. Of course, I was wicked, and weak, and my conduct altogether was vile. I have no excuse to offer—but I have explained my wickedness in long years of torment! My whole existence has been one long pain, but through it all my dominant passion—pride—grew stronger and stronger, and kept me up in spite of everything.

"I made efforts to see Moreland's mother in whose charge his son had been left, and knowing she was not well off I offered her pecuniary aid, which she, however, refused. Still I learned that she had changed her name, and gone away to a little remote village, leaving the few cottages that belonged to her in the hands of a W—lawyer named Stevens, who sent her the rents every quarter, and that she was bringing up the boy also under a false name.

"Now"—she made a long pause, looking from one to the other of the averted faces—"I know that I do not deserve pardon, but I implore you to forgive me if you can, and to rectify the evil I have done. Think of my long suffering—think that I am dying, and be merciful."

Her voice rose to a shrill scream of anguish, and Claudia came forward and laid her hand on her father's arm.

"Tell her you forgive her, papa!"

Sir Everard tried to speak, but the words died away on his trembling lips. Lionel, who had

not been so deeply injured, assured the dying woman of his pardon, but still her eyes sought her brother.

"Everard—Everard——!"

Then, with a supreme effort, the Baronet took her hand.

"I forgive you, Pauline, as I hope to be forgiven!"

It is eight months later. The primroses are starting the moss in the woods, and the daisies are sprinkled over Pauline Brent's grave—for at her own request her body was taken down to Brentwood to be buried, and after the funeral Sir Everard and his daughter went to Italy, to stay there for the winter.

They are back again now, and on their way through London are joined by Lionel Fane—for he still keeps his assumed name, although the truth about the murder is now known, and people cannot point to him as the son of a criminal.

He has done good work in the winter months, and his Academy picture—a young girl sitting in a wood, with bunches of primroses at her feet, and a vague dreamy look in her eyes as she gazes into the sunny distance—has been highly praised, and has brought the artist a golden harvest. It is called "Some Day!" and people who cannot understand the girl's expression wonder what the name means.

Claudia—between whom and the picture there is a great resemblance—knows perfectly well what it means, and indeed the meaning is fulfilled, for her father has given his consent to her marriage with Lionel, and the wedding is to take place as soon as a year has elapsed since Pauline Brent's death.

They never mention her name, but there are always fresh flowers on her grave, and certainly her memory has left more pity than anger in all their hearts; for if her sin was great, so, doubtless was her suffering.

And so the "Some Day" that was to bring happiness has come at last, and undimmed sunshine glorifies the path of the lovers, whose love is all the deeper for the "cleansing fire" through which it has passed.

[THE END]

CONTRARY to general belief, gold can be completely dissolved in water. The colour of such a solution may be either red, blue, purple, or black. To make the red solution, a solution of bicarbonate of soda is poured into a diluted solution of gold chloride, formaldehyde is added, and the mixture brought to a boil while being stirred. The water employed must be perfectly pure. The solution thus obtained is very weak; it is concentrated by dialysis so as to contain as much as a gramme of gold to the litre of water. This liquid passes uncharged through the thickest filter-paper, and may be kept three months without forming a sediment.

GREAT INDUSTRIAL FLOWER SHOW.—The new schedule has been issued for the "One and All" Flower Show, to be held at the Crystal Palace, in August, in connection with the Annual Co-operative Festival. The schedule this year is in two parts, forming two illustrated pamphlets, running into about 140 pages, and containing offers of prizes calculated to stimulate every kind of horticultural excellence amongst working men, women, and children throughout the kingdom. The prizes, over 1,000 in number, include a Silver Champion Cup by Countess Grey; Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals by the Agricultural and Horticultural Society; a Silver Cup by Miss Wilmett, V.M.H.; an original Water-Colour Drawing by Miss Marie Lowe (Mrs. Hensley); special prizes offered by many Co-operative Societies; £150 by the Crystal Palace Company; and £200 by the Council of the Agricultural and Horticultural Association. Copies of either schedule may be obtained free of charge from the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Edward Owen Greening, at 3, Agar Street, Charing Cross, W.C.

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

—10—

CHAPTER XXV.

"Now this is a curious coincidence!" exclaimed Sir Edward, as he looked up from a letter he was in the act of reading the next morning. "Here's a letter about you, Vere, just as if she knew you were staying in the house!"

"About me! Who can it be from?" setting down his coffee-cup and beginning to stare.

He was not one of those men who think it only natural that they should occupy women's pens as well as their tongues.

"Lady Kildersly, a dear old friend of mine, but as mad as a March hare; but you shall judge for yourself! As we are all friends here"—looking round the table, where there was only one chair empty, and that was his nephew's—"It can be no breach of confidence to read it out. I will pass over the beginning of it. Ahem!" clearing his throat and adjusting his glasses—"Many years ago, when I was staying in Devonshire with my dear old friend Mary Curtis—who died last year to my infinite regret—I was walking along the beach, when I saw some children playing on the rocks far in advance. I had scarcely noticed them, when a child clambered on to a particularly large boulder, and in another moment his foot slipped, and he fell into the sea. I screamed and ran as fast as I could to the spot, but the child would have been drowned before I could reach him if another boy had not jumped into the water in a most courageous manner and dragged him back into safety. I suppose you have heard all this before, as the child who was saved was your nephew!"—"Indeed, I hadn't!"—"and his preserver, who had a most interesting countenance, with frank, blue eyes and golden curls, gave the name of Cyril Vere, from Rutlandshire. I am a lonely old woman, with curious fancies, and it occurred to me that I should much like to trace the subsequent career of this gallant child, whose bravery should never be allowed to pass into oblivion. Hearing from Mrs. Arkwright, when she was in London a fortnight ago, that you had a young lady from Rutlandshire now living under your roof, I am in hopes that she may be able to give me some particulars concerning this young gentleman, who comes from the same county as herself. Fortunately, Rutland is the smallest of all our counties, so the clue is not so vague as it sounds. If you can glean any information, and will forward it as soon as you conveniently can, you will be conferring a great favour. If the young gentleman is anywhere within reach, I should be very grateful if he would come and see me at my usual address, 19, Chesterfield Gardens."

"There, what do you think of that!"

A chorus of exclamations rose on every side, but Vere took it all very quietly.

"If I were you," said Sir Edward, with a smile, "I would go up at once, or she might go off the hook without having had time to leave you her fortune!"

"Do you think she would really care?" listlessly, as if the matter did not concern him much.

"I am sure she would! There's a train at 12.30, if you like to try your luck to-day!"

"I promised Colonel Daycourt to go over there. I think it will do just as well to-morrow, or, rather, Monday; and then I can send a line to prepare her."

"You don't seem over keen about it!"

"You see the lady is old, not young!"

"All the more likely to do you a good turn! Another cup of tea, my dear," to his wife.

"And so you really saved Godfrey's life!" said Meta, looking up at Vere with fervent gratitude. "What friends you ought to be, for ever and ever!"

"On the contrary. According to the old adage, the life that you save is sure to be either your death or your ruin!"

"Not likely in this case!" and Meta smiled confidently, whilst Nella looked up at him with a questioning glance, and their eyes met.

Both instantly felt that the ruin of their happiness might well come through Godfrey Somerville, though neither would have cared to confess the fear.

Was it only twenty-four hours since Nella had sat at the same breakfast-table, bubbling over with spirits and fun, ready to laugh at the weakest joke, and adding her own share to the general stock?

Cyril was sitting beside her, as he did then, attending to all her wants, it is true, but with a grave politeness as if she had been a stranger, rather than the girl who considered herself even more than a sister.

Unless he roused himself with a transparent effort at cheerfulness, his face was stern as a general's on the eve of a battle with the responsibility of a whole army on his shoulder, and Nella felt as lively as if she had had a mummy for her next-door neighbour.

She made her head ache trying to conceive what had brought this new estrangement between them, but could imagine no possible reason for it.

Once or twice she found Mr. Mallon's eyes, from under their bushy, red eyebrows, fixed on her with an expression of sympathy, mixed with speculation, which seemed to imply that he was in the secret.

Something must have occurred during the course of their ride, because she met them in the hall, and noticed the change at once in Cyril before Somerville had time to meet them; and concocted any falsehoods about her.

Perhaps Miss Arkwright had poisoned his mind; and yet what had she ever done to earn her ill-will?

Then she suddenly recollected how she had released Godfrey from his attendance upon her, and Dulcie had burst into tears.

There was some mystery about them all that she could not fathom, and Miss Arkwright might have imagined from her simple action that she was league with Somerville against them.

Still Cyril would surely tell her that she was mistaken after the explanation of the night before. Surely he could not think evil of her after that?

Determined to break the ice, she turned to him playfully, just as Godfrey came in, and asked if he had any more buttons to be sewn on.

"Thanks, they didn't come off! What are you going to do, Miss Somerville, when we are all out?"

"Amuse ourselves as well as we can! Colonel Deyncourt ought to have known better than to leave us out! Shall we go for a ride, Nella?"

"I—I've got such a headache!"

Cyril turned his head quickly and looked at her, but said nothing; whilst Lady Somerville remarked, from the top of the table: "Then you had better lie down, my dear, and no one shall disturb you! There is nothing like rest for a headache; and, Meta, you and I might go and pay that call which has been owing such a long time to the Hargreaves."

"Very well, mamma; that will do very well."

"I shall sleep away from the Deyncourts as early as I can, Meta," and Godfrey looked across the table at Nella, although purporting to address his betrothed.

Happening to catch Mr. Mallon's eyes she most inopportunately grew crimson, and, biting her lip with vexation, immediately announced her intention of going for a long walk.

"Yes, go out and seek an adventure," said Somerville encouragingly. "Only tell us in which direction, that we may know where to find you."

"I don't want to be found."

"But you generally like to be met."

Again she felt Cyril's eyes upon her, and her colour rose. "How generally!"

He smiled as he stirred his coffee.

Knowing what his object was, she felt as if she would like to strangle him. Looking at Mr. Mallon, who for the moment seemed her only friend, she said, with a forced smile,—

"Whenever I go out alone, I never meet anyone but the labourers; and, do you know, sometimes I am almost afraid of them. If they chose

to knock me down and rob me it would be so easy."

"Yes, but detection would be easy too; and you would probably have but little in your pocket. Still, if I had these fancies," he added, with a smile, "I think I should stick to the grounds. There is plenty of space, and no danger."

"But Miss Maynard does not object to danger in the usual run," said Cyril, abruptly.

"She hates monotony, and would fret herself to death if she thought her life were going to be as commonplace as other people's!" remembering with renewed bitterness how she had rebelled against the level monotony of Elstone.

"Some people are content to be dormice, asleep for more than half the year. I don't see that they are better than others," she said, resentfully; "and I don't intend to copy them."

"Don't! Originality is refreshing," put in Godfrey; "and there is very little of it left in the world."

"Nan's Tower is about the most original place I ever saw," and Cyril looked at him sharply. "I should think the owner must match it."

"I fancy he's a money-grabbing stock-broker; but I really don't know," said Somerville carelessly. "You all seem so madly interested, that I wonder you don't try to find out."

"Interested is a strong word—curious would be better," said Mr. Mallon, slowly. "It gave you the sort of feeling that you have when a child has asked you a riddle. You don't care how open for the answer, and yet you ask what it is."

"Well, you won't get an answer to this!"

"If we chose to take the trouble we might. For instance, if I were looking out for a house in the neighbourhood and took a fancy to it, I suppose somebody hereabout could tell me who bought it of the original owner."

A slight, almost imperceptible change came over Somerville's face, and he dropped the piece of anchovy-toast, which he was holding on the point of his fork, into his lap.

"It's infernally damp. You would die of rheumatism before a month was out!"

"Somebody lives there—that gaunt old woman who brought the wine—and she isn't a cripple by any means."

"Don't know, never saw her in my life."

"Godfrey!" exclaimed Meta, who did not find the conversation particularly interesting. "How is it that you never told us that Mr. Vere had saved your life?"

"That is such an old story—time to forget it, I've no doubt," opening his heavy eyes and shooting a glance across the table, "some day Vere will be profuse sorry that he ever did it!"

"When he is," said Nella, with a mischievous smile, feeling obliged to hit anybody or everybody in her present frame of mind, "perhaps he will get somebody to take you prisoner, and shut you up in Nan's Tower, and then you will be lost for ever."

The coffee-cup fell from Somerville's hand, smashed to pieces, and dashed the contents over the smooth, white cloth, and Mr. Mallon sprang to his feet apparently without any motive whatever, whilst Cyril never moved a muscle, but offered his table-napkin to wipe up the mess.

A bomb-shell might have produced as satisfactory results.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I THINK you are hard on her, as I said before," and Mr. Mallon shook his head, as he patted his horse's neck. "Half the women in Blankshire may be wearing red bows at this moment."

"Yes, but they are not likely to drop them in the harbour at Nan's Tower, nor to be of the same pattern. This ribbon has a little speckle in the border," touching his breast-pocket; "besides, didn't you see that she had lost a bow from the side of her skirt?"

"No, I hadn't studied her as you had, Vere. I know nothing about her," lowering his voice;

"but that girl, I could take my oath, is devoted to you."

Cyril shook his close-cropped head.

"Not a bit of it. She would do anything for me for the sake of auld lang syne, but that is all. That brute Somerville has bewitched her!"

"She trod on his toes at breakfast."

"It was only a random shot; but, I say, you lost your head completely. A child might have found you out."

Mr. Mallon looked ashamed of himself, but at that moment Sir Edward came out and got into the dog-cart. Cyril took his place by his side, Mr. Mallon got up on Bastercup, and Somerville brought up the rear on Pearl.

The house seemed very quiet after their departure, and Meta yawned a good many times over her needlework. Nella was too angry and depressed to be sleepy, but felt thankful for a brief period of rest. When Godfrey was in the house she was obliged to guard over every look and word, and to be armed at all points; now she could say or do anything she liked and no one would wonder.

With wearying repetition she asked herself what was the matter with Cyril. The abrupt way in which he had turned from her to Meta, when she asked him that harmless question about the buttons, had stung her to the quick, and really mortified her more than his previous indifference. After the sunshine of yesterday, to put it metaphorically, it was difficult to bear the east wind with anything like serenity.

Lady Somerville broke in upon her reflections. "Mr. Mallon strikes me as a very gentlemanly man, in spite of his personal peculiarities. I cannot help thinking that he has some attraction in the neighbourhood, which he does not care to acknowledge."

"Of what sort, mamma! I hope it is quite proper!"

"Otherwise, I should not have mentioned it. I thought perhaps he had lost his heart to some young lady who is above him in station. Miss Arkwright, for instance."

"I don't think so," objected Nella, "for I saw Cyril introduce him to her yesterday, so they must have been strangers. But you wouldn't call her above him in station?"

"Not exactly, only she is a great heiress."

"Not like Meta, who has no brother."

"But then Meta's fate is settled," with a smile; "and I am thankful for it. With Godfrey for my son-in-law I shall gain a son, and not lose a daughter."

"Don't talk of it, mamma!" Meta said hastily. "I always have a feeling that it won't come off."

"What could prevent it, my dear!" looking quite aghast.

Meta bent over her work. "He might like some one else better."

"Not when he is engaged to you. I never heard such a ridiculous idea. Nella, my dear, I wish you would play us something, music in the morning is so enlivening."

Feeling restless and dissatisfied, Nella, compelled with alacrity, a wild nocturne of Brahms' sitting better with her present mood than needlework. Oh! if she could only fly away on the wings of melody and be at rest—beyond the craving of useless longing—beyond the fear of eternal disappointment! Surely there was some land, however distant, where faith would not be met with the upfaith of doubt—where love in all its joy and blessedness would last more than half-a-day!

The music seemed to soothe her soul, though her head throbbed distractingly. She scarcely ate any luncheon, but still persisted in imagining that a walk would do her good, in spite of Lady Somerville's entreaties that she would stay at home, and lie down on the sofa.

The carriage drove off punctually at half-past two, but Nella was delayed by the advent of a humble little dressmaker, whom she had employed to make a simple serge costume for the morning; and it was close upon half-past three when she called out.

Not caring much whether she went, she passed through the gate at the end of the shrubbery

and took the road to Alverley, walking briskly to keep herself warm.

It was a dull, grey afternoon with ominous clouds hanging overhead suggestive of snow, and a bitter east wind nipping the tip of her delicate nose.

She was under the impression that exercise would do her head good, so struggled on, in spite of a strong inclination to turn back and subside into a comfortable armchair in front of a cheerful fire.

Also, she was afraid of returning home early, in case it might look as if she had come back on purpose to meet Somerville.

The nearest way to Colonel Dayncourt's place—Slicotes—was by a narrow road which skirted the edge of a wood, in quite a different direction from the one she had taken, so she was aware from any chance of being picked up inconspicuously by the dog-cart.

Turning many things over in her mind, she came to the conclusion that life was far more interesting than it used to be.

Godfrey, by his extraordinary behaviour, saved her from anything like stagnation of thought, and Cyril did his best to keep her in a fever of anxiety.

What the mystery was that surrounded them all she could not imagine, but she made up her mind that Miss Arkwright was at the bottom of it, and had a good deal to answer for.

She could not make out if Mr. Mallon were an outsider or a principal, and determined to watch him accordingly.

Her cogitations had engrossed her to such a degree that she went farther than she had intended, and it was growing dusk when she suddenly came to the conclusion that she ought to turn back.

So far she had met nobody, but now she heard the sound of horse's hoofs galloping on the frosty road; and in a panic of fear, for which she was at a loss to account in her cooler moments, ran to the hedge to hide herself if possible amongst its straggling branches.

She had just crept under a particularly thorny briar when Godfrey Somerville passed, his own face white as death, and the foam flying in snowy flakes from Pearl's mouth.

In spite of the speed at which he was going he caught sight of her, and pulling up as soon as he could, came back to the spot where he had seen her.

"What are you doing there?" he said, roughly.

"And in the scowl of Heaven each face another grew dark as he was speaking."

"I am just going home," a strange feeling of fear making her voice shake, as she felt the sense of mystery growing round her in the dusky light.

"And the first thing you'll do is to blurt out that you've seen me!" Then he sprang from his horse, and seized her by both hands, whilst Pearl stood panting by, too exhausted to think of running away. "Nell, you won't betray me!"

"Let me go this instant!" her spirit rising with her temper.

"Not till you have given me your promise, Nell!" his agitation growing with every instant, as he held her hands in a tightening grip. "I'm a desperate ruined man, if you say a word. You don't want to bring everything that's horrible on my head? You wouldn't be so mean and spiteful! Promise!"

The road was growing darker as the minutes flew. She looked up into his face, it was working with passion, and its expression frightened her.

She was alone with him, without a living creature at hand to help her, and the only wish of her heart was to get away. Without waiting to make conditions, which would have been so infinitely wiser, she said, quickly,—

"Go where you like, I won't tell."

"Heaven bless you!" his voice thick with excess of feeling; then he released her hands, and she flew down the road as if a mad bull had been in pursuit.

When she stopped to recover her breath, she

heard the whistle of a train, and wondered if it had been his wish to catch it. If he succeeded, she piled his horse. After that she went home as fast as she could, her nerves having been somewhat upset by this sudden meeting; but when she was safe within the four walls of her own room, her head throbbled so maddeningly that she was obliged to throw herself on her bed instead of going down to tea. She could not think, she could only lie still and suffer.

By-and-by Meta came up to look for her, and was very sympathising about her poor head, stopping so kindly to bathe it with eau-de-Cologne and toilet vinegar that Nella would have guessed, if she had not known it, that Somerville had not come in with the rest.

"Don't let me keep you, dear," she groaned, longing to be left in peace.

"Oh! mamma's in no hurry, and only Mr. Vere and papa have come back. I can't tell what can be keeping the others. Papa says that Godfrey left the Dayncourts quite early—he thought perhaps, till he found that Pearl was not in the stables, that he had gone out for a walk with you."

"My dear, I'm not you. Go down, please," tried to the very limit of patience.

"I'll send you up a cup of tea with some lemon-jelly in it; Godfrey always takes that when he has a headache." With this conclusive argument in favour of the remedy, she left the room, and Nella turned her face from the light with an impatient sigh.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEAD leaves lying under foot, naked branches stretching out their arms to the leaden clouds above, and a cold, east wind searching out the hidden corners, and yet Dalce Arkwright left the roaring fire in the library, on which the footman had just piled some fresh logs of wood, and, shrouded in a large cloak lined with sable, came tripping down the shrubbery, with a happy smile on her lips, a joyous light in her eyes, looking furtively from side to side, till a tall form came from under an arch of ivy, and then with a breathless sigh of joy she hid her blushes on his breast.

There was no need for words between them; tried and tempered by the fire of adversity there was no doubt to raise a barrier—each knew the depth of feeling in the other's heart. A long pause, whilst the sky grew dark and the wind blew, and both cold and darkness were nothing to either.

A long pause, and then the woman, as usual, spoke first. "Any news?"

He shook his head dejectedly. "None, and yet for hours we prowled about the place, listening to every sound, watching every door and window."

"And you saw nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing till four o'clock, when a lamp was lighted by that woman whom we saw the other day. I could see her distinctly standing by the table in the room above the door. Then she came to the window, and drew down the blind. Of course we were looking with all our eyes—this was after Vere came back from seeing you—and presently a shadow, which I believe was here, came across the blind."

"You think so really?" her heart beating fast.

"I do, but it is ages since I last saw her, and she had her hair hanging down."

"How very strange! But what next?"

"After that the shutters were shut, and as there was not a single chink by which I could see through them—though I climbed on to the portico, and rubbed my nose against the glass—we came away."

"And what will you do next?"

"You will laugh," smoothing her hair fondly and reverently with his fingers. "I was thinking of trying the pedlar dodge—that is, borrowing a pack from some itinerant dealer, and forcing my way in through a woman's love of fancy."

"I think you might as well try it on the stones in the road. That woman has nothing soft about her."

"Do you call vanity soft? It has made some women very cruel—Queen Bees, for instance."

"Yes, but Pendergast is made of stone. I don't believe she has a feeling to work upon."

"If our suspicions are correct, she must be very faithful to Somerville."

"Or he has a hold upon her—that is much more likely. Probably she has committed some crime, and he has promised not to tell."

"What a horrible thought! It doesn't sound like you, Dalce," looking down at her beautiful face with a tender smile.

"I have had nothing but horrible thoughts for years. Don't look so sad," interrupting herself hastily. "I shan't remember them when the bright days come."

"What I have cost you!" his brows contracting as if in pain.

"What you will bring me!" with a rapturous smile. "Oh, Victor, I shall never want to die when we are together."

"We must arrange to do it together or not at all; but I mustn't keep you out in the cold."

"I don't mind it a bit. Shall you go there again on your way home?"

"I suppose so, though it will be no use. What a capital fellow Vere is; I owe him everything!"

"You don't know what he has been to me! Mother"—with a little laugh—"thought it was getting serious."

"And you!" with a searching glance into the depths of her hazel eyes.

"I should have liked a stable-boy if he had brought me news of you."

"It would have been better for you—a thousand times better—if you had chosen him instead of me," feeling acutely all the misery he had brought on her young life—a life that promised so fairly till he threw a blight across it.

"It might have been better if I had been born a different girl, with a different name and a different nature, but for Dalce Arkwright there was no other choice possible. Oh, Victor!" with sudden passion, "do you think I could have cared for anyone else, when I had once seen you?"

His lip quivered, as he drew her nearer to him.

"I was the most miserable dog upon earth—and you were sorry for me."

"But you were happy when I first saw you!" looking up into his face with a smile. "Do you remember that haymaking at Somerville Hall, when they nearly carried us away with a haycock, and Sir Edward only just stopped them in time? Do you remember the dance in the evening, when you made me behave so shockingly!"

"I know. I wouldn't let you dance with anyone but me. Don't talk of it, dear!"—with a frown of pain—"the present seems like a nightmare."

"But it will come back, and we shall be quite crazed with happiness, because we can go about just like other people; I shall be so proud then—the proudest girl in England."

"Proud of what?" looking down at her sweet face, with intense tenderness.

"Proud of you!" clasping his hand in both her own; "proud to think you've been through so much, and borne it so well."

"Not much to boast of—I've taken it out in grumbling. But I must not keep you, dear, with a sigh, for he felt it was almost impossible to tear himself away. "Good-bye, and Heaven take care of you, for I can't!"

A long, silent kiss, a murmured "Till Tuesday," and then, with a wave of her small, white hand, she fled down the darkening shrubbery, and Victor stood still with folded arms watching her disappear, as a man who sees the sun set on his joy.

When there was no longer a trace of her to be seen he made his way through the kitchen-garden to a door at the bottom, which Dalce had taken care to see was unlocked. Battercup, whom he had tied to a railing which surrounded a spinnery, neighed loudly, as he came up.

Alarmed lest the sound should attract attention he mounted in a hurry, and put him at the edge which separated that bit of grass-land from the road. To his dismay, he alighted almost on



"LET ME GO THIS INSTANT!" SAID NELL, HER SPIRIT RISING WITH HER TEMPER.

the top of Jack Arkwright, who was coming along with his gun over his shoulder, and a couple of dogs at his heels.

Jack started back in immense surprise.

"Halloa! look out! What the deuce have you been after?" looking suspiciously over the hedge.

"Caught in the act!" and Mr. Mallon smiled. Primed with an excuse by Cyril, he brought it forth with ready self-possession, the fear of Dulcie's being compromised keeping his wits alive. "This is the shortest way, isn't it! I have just been leaving a message at your place. Some address that Vere promised your sister I think."

"Ah, I dare say; something about Tuesday—the music, the ice, or the floor. I should like to cut the whole thing. Come back and have a smoke?" patting Buttercup's neck.

"Must get home, thanks. See you, I suppose, at Copplestone!"

"Yes, if I've anything decent to carry me. I've been unlucky lately with my hunters. That's a good horse of yours," eyeing his points with the air of a 'vet.' "What would you take for him?"

"He's too old a friend to part with." Then with a friendly nod he rode on, whilst Jack went homewards at a leisurely pace.

Turning to the left, instead of the right, which would have led him past the "Red Poughnashare," Mr. Mallon cantered briskly along the road until he came within sight of the dark foliage of the evergreen oaks which surrounded Nun's Tower. Then he checked Buttercup's eager desire for his stable, and rode slowly along the fence, and standing up in his stirrups every now and then to peer over the yew-hedge.

There was nothing to be seen but darkness—impenetrable darkness—unrelieved by the smallest ray of light. When he reached the gate, he was surprised to find it wide open. He rode in, rather expecting to meet Somerville in the drive; but there was no sound, except the creaking of

the branches as they swayed to and fro in the east wind.

Presently he dismounted, for the sake of prudence, and led his horse cautiously into the shadows, where he left him tied up under an oak.

Then he walked up the drive to the house, taking care to keep on the grass, lest the sound of his footsteps might penetrate to an unseen ear.

It was lighter in front of the Tower, where the trees fell back in a sort of semicircle, and he looked round to see if there were any trace of Somerville's presence. But the place seemed quite desolate. As his eyes travelled slowly over the front of the weird-looking building, there was no sign of a single living creature within it—not a ray of light penetrated from the windows, though the shutters were not shut, or the blinds drawn. The place seemed given over to damp and solitude, a fitting spot to be haunted by ghosts or connected with a legend of crime.

Victor shivered, then shook himself as if to throw off the oppression of the dark, mysterious stillness, and walked across the soaking grass to the portico. He tried the handle of the door, and, to his surprise, the door was not locked. Then, for the first time, as he stepped unhindered into the hitherto jealously guarded hall, a fear crossed his mind that Somerville had outwitted him, and carried Robin off.

What a fool he had been to wait and dawdle about, instead of sending a couple of detectives to watch the house night and day. Then, at least, he might have had the satisfaction of knowing who went, and where they had gone. Now he was as completely in the dark as he was before Vere ever suggested to him that Nun's Tower might hold the secret on which depended the happiness of his life, as well as that life itself.

With the gloomiest of forebodings gathering round him he went into a small room on the ground floor, where was some meal, either luncheon or dinner, lying unattracted, and quite cold on the table. There was a dish of mutton cutlets, the gravy turned into solid fat; a simple pud-

ding, a pot of jam, a bottle of sherry, and a loaf of bread with a knife left in it, as if someone had been called away when in the act of cutting it. The fire was almost out, and a chair was lying on its back on the floor.

Mr. Mallon looked from the loaf to the chair, and decided that Mrs. Pendergast had been called away in a hurry—she had thrown down the loaf without finishing the slice—she had knocked down the chair without waiting to pick it up. But why?

Had there been some dreadful tragedy? Had the poor girl, maddened by her wretched life, resolved to put an end to it?

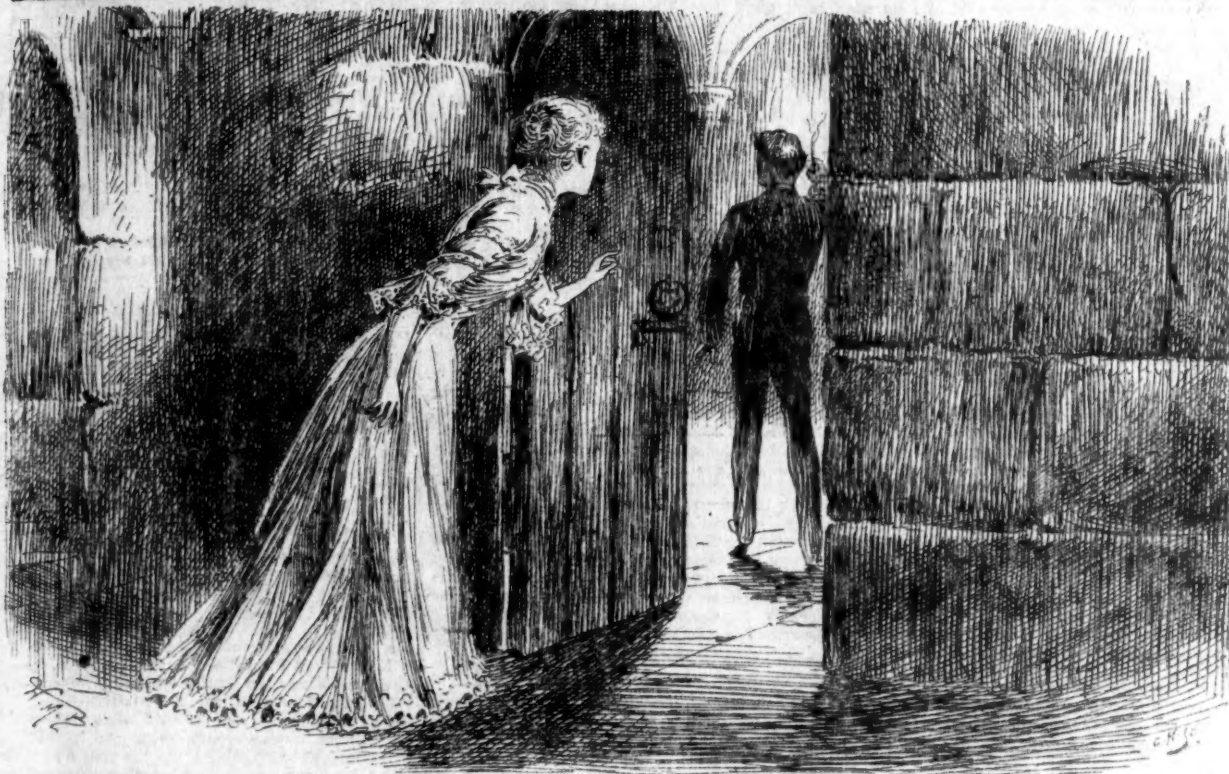
In the excited state of his imagination he could easily conjure up the scene—the cry breaking the stillness—the rush upstairs—and then, his blood froze as he followed, in fancy, and saw the poor little Robin with broken wings, senseless, shattered, and still!

"Gone to the God who gave her that life of sorrow and pain,
Gone to ask for another that might turn her loss to gain."

He had lighted a cigar-light to examine the contents of the room, and he lit a second as he groped his way along the hall to the stone stairs. His tiny little ray seemed rather to increase than to diminish the darkness, and every hair on his body stood erect, as he peered into the corners, fearing a horror at every step!

(To be continued.)

A COUNTRYMAN who had selected a seat at the theatre from which he could obtain a good view of the stage was greatly discouraged when a young lady, wearing a fashionable hat, sat down in front of him. He bore the affliction in silence as long as he could, and then, bending forward, said politely: "Please, miss, would you be so kind as to lower your umbrella. She lowered it, and the applause of the audience.



STIEL DARTED FORWARD, SHOT THE BOLT, AND PHILIP GREVILLE WAS A PRISONER AT HER MERCY.

REDEEMED BY FATE.

—10:—

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALTHOUGH, owing to Philip's refusal of the Indian appointment, one effect on which Sir Jasper Rathven had reckoned as a certain result of his revelation did not follow; his conviction that it would hasten the young man's departure was not miscalculated, for Greville recoiled with a sick loathing from any longer sharing the same roof as that which sheltered him, who, in spite of the relationship between them, he could only regard as a cold-hearted *roué*, careless of who suffered so long as he obtained the gratification of his own selfish desires.

He had never liked Sir Jasper; but now he absolutely detested him, and the shock of his confession was in effect terrible. Unconsciously, even to himself, he had built up a fabric of bright visions on the discovery of the secret shrouding his birth, and now he longed with untold vehemence that it had remained wrapped for ever in its original obscurity, and that he had been spared a knowledge of the humiliating truth.

"I must not give myself time to think of it; I must try my hardest to drive it from my mind!" he muttered, knowing even while he spoke the words how useless the endeavour would be.

He resolved to leave for London by the midnight express—he could not go before because of seeing Lord Urwick; and besides, he was hoping to catch a glimpse of Haldé, and wish her good-bye.

He proceeded straight to his rooms, and began packing up his luggage; and when he had nearly finished, went downstairs to the butler to ask him for some oil to grease the lock of his portmanteau, which had become rusty.

"I am going to town to-night by the 12 10 train, Parser," he observed, putting the small bottle of oil, with which the man supplied him,

into his pocket; "but as it will be rather late to have the dog cart, my luggage can be sent on to-morrow morning. I have already addressed it, so will you see that it goes!"

Parser promised to do so, and then Philip went to the telegraph office, which was at the station, and which he knew closed early.

"I had better send and tell Pierson to get me a bed at A——'s Hotel, otherwise I may have to perambulate the streets all night," he thought to himself as he walked along under the trees. "Good heavens! what a tangled labyrinth life is—what a mingling of cross currents—a game of chance and change!"

He might well say that, in view of all that had happened even within the last twenty-four hours—events had indeed precipitated themselves, and it seemed as if he were fated to be the principal performer in the various life dramas now in course of enactment beneath the roof of Heathcliff Priors!

Heathcliff was not a large station, and, as a rule, was quietude itself; but this evening, owing to a fair that had taken place in the neighbourhood, it was crowded with holiday-making rustics, who were shouting out comic songs at the top of their voices, and conducting themselves in the generally hilarious and disorderly manner that seems to embody the ideas of enjoyment possessed by the lower order of the British public.

Philip picked his way among them with some little difficulty, and wired off this message. "Greville, Heathcliff, to R. Pierson—Smith's Buildings, Temple. Am coming up to-night. Engage me a bed at A——'s Hotel. Will be with you first thing in the morning."

Then he left the station, and returned by an unfrequented way skirting the park, and arrived at the Priors without meeting anyone. At the stained-glass window against which he was standing when he had hurt his wrist, and first saw Sir Jasper, he paused and looked out at the landscape, softened, as we all are, at the idea of saying good-bye. He remembered the feelings

with which he had regarded it on that first evening; and then by a very natural transition, his thoughts wandered to the night when he had followed Sir Jasper to this end of the passage, and been mystified by his inexplicable disappearance.

"He told a lie when he said he passed me," he muttered. "There must be some hiding-place or exit near, and he availed himself of it. If I could only discover it, that affair of the hand last night might be cleared up."

He utterly refused to place any credence in the supernatural, and reason told him that human hands did not appear—except at the Egyptian Hall, perhaps, under the guidance of Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke—without the body to which they belonged; thus it followed that the owner of the one he had seen must have been concealed behind the green baize curtain, although when he looked he had not discovered anyone. Prompted by a sudden impulse, the artist raised the drapery and made an even more careful examination than he had done the previous evening.

There were three panels, all carved very elaborately in oak; the centre one represented the trio of goddesses on Mount Ida, and Paris, "beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris," awarding the apple to golden-haired Aphrodite, while Wisdom and Power looked on in angry displeasure—the allegory that repeats itself, and will go on repeating itself till the end of time!

It struck Philip the fruit was rather more raised from the surface of the wood than the trees and foliage by which it was surrounded, so to this he directed his efforts, pressing it on every side with all his force. At length he was rewarded with success; the faintest possible click was heard, and the panel moved aside, thus disclosing an aperture amply wide enough for a man to pass through.

Just for a moment Philip stood looking at it, almost as much taken aback as if it had come upon him by surprise, instead of being the result of a premeditated search. Afterward

this excitement of adventure upon him, he went to his room, fetched a piece of cord, and a wax taper, and with the former tied back the panel to prevent all possibility of its closing.

Then he entered the opening.

Left alone, Sybil Rathvan had remained for nearly half-an-hour, motionless, and in exactly the same attitude, while with maddening persistency one sentence echoed its terror through her brain.—

"He will tell Claud what I have done!"

Of the crime itself she thought infinitely less than of its failure; but she knew that Lord Urwicke would draw back, shocked beyond expression, when he learned that her hand had been lifted against his wife's life—yes, even if, as she hoped, he might yet love her better than the woman who bore his name. At the anticipation of his contempt, she grovelled in a very anguish of shame, bitter than even death itself to her proud spirit.

"What evil fate sent this Philip Greville to cross my path and thwart me!" she muttered at length, rising and throwing back the loosened strands of her night-black hair, while her hands clasped and unclasped themselves in a fever of restlessness. "Other women have done as much as I for the man they loved, and the world has never been the wiser—is it that I was born under an unlucky star, or have I only miscalculated?"

There must have been some want in her moral nature, the lack of which wrapped her in an impenetrable cloak of egotism, that rendered her actually callous to any sufferings save her own. Like Sir Jasper, she was utterly selfish, and like him she imagined her will strong enough to overcome all difficulties. No Eumenides would ever have power to lash her with the scorpion-stings of awakened conscience, for the simple reason that she did not possess a conscience; and so the only possibility of remorse reaching her would be if she failed to accomplish the object she had set herself.

Her love for Claud Urwicke, wild, intense, unreasoning as it was, was yet in its essence the purest passion of her nature. For him she would have borne misery, pain, degradation—anything, in fact, that Fate could inflict, and would have gloried in the sacrifices, much as Heloise gloried when her devotion to Abelard was flung back upon her with contumely and insult.

But that he should know her as she was—a murderer, taken red-handed—that he should shrink from her, with loathing in his eyes and words of abhorrence on his lips—to this any other humiliation would be preferable.

Of what might follow—a trial, public exposure, conviction—she thought little, and cared less—all her terrors ended in the one supreme fear of his contempt; and beyond this she did not look.

At last she paused in the monotonous regularity of her walk up and down.

"I will go to Greville, and plead to him once more!" she exclaimed, aloud, with a gesture of extremest despair. "It will probably be useless; but for all that I won't give up till my last chance has vanished."

She went to the glass and bound up her hair, starting back almost in horror, as she saw her own ghastly reflection. Her cheeks and lips were perfectly colourless, and her eyes, larger, darker, brighter than ever, seemed to take up the greater part of her face.

"I don't think there would be much danger of anyone falling in love with me now!" she said, with a hard, merciless laugh; and then she opened the door, and crept cautiously along the passages until she came to the artist's apartment.

There she paused, for at the end of the passage she saw Philip in the act of securing an open panel with a piece of cord, and her quick brain instantly seized the truth of what had, in reality, occurred.

She drew back so that he should not see her, and watched him look round as if to make sure he was alone, and then vanish through the aperture, while she was wondering how such an

exit could have existed without having come to her knowledge—for she had spoken the truth when telling Greville she knew nothing whatever about it.

A minute later, gathering her skirts closely round her to prevent their rustling, and stepping as lightly as a shadow, she had reached the opening and passed through, to find herself at the head of a narrow, stone staircase which Philip had evidently descended.

At the bottom ran a passage, equally narrow, and composed of huge blocks of masonry covered with a slimy sort of damp that threw out a close and unwholesome odour, and on the right was a room that had once perhaps served as a cell for refractory monks in the days when Heathcliffe Priory was an old abbey.

This room Philip had entered, and was now standing with his back to the door, and the taper held above his head, apparently in the act of examining it.

Outside Sybil paused, an evil glitter that the darkness hid coming to her eyes. A sudden idea had darted through her feeble brain, and she bent down to examine the fastening of the door, which was one of solid oak, standing partially ajar just as the young man had pushed it.

All that secured it was a heavy iron bolt.

One moment's pause, one swift dash of compunction, vanishing as Claud Urwicke's face came before her—then her lips setting themselves close together, and her heart beating so fast that it threatens to suffocate her, she draws the door quickly to, shoots forward the bolt, and Philip Greville is a prisoner at her mercy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HALF AN HOUR later Lord Urwicke stood in his wife's dressing room, facing Dr. Clifford and the great London Physician who had travelled down with him from town.

"Dying!" he said, in a low, awed whisper. "Good Heaven! Can nothing be done to save her?"

He looked wildly from one to the other, but they only turned away, as if—accustomed as they were to such sights—the deadly pallor of his face provoked their pity.

He sank down in a chair, covering his face with his hands, and groaning. He had come from London immediately on receiving the telegram telling him of Muriel's condition, and as has been said, had journeyed in company with Sir James C— a tall, white-haired man, whose fame had passed through all the land, but who confessed himself powerless to cope with the fell disease that had stricken Lady Urwicke, stealing all her strength, and eating away the vigour of her young life, as a worm eats the heart of a rose in its bloom.

And of the nature of the malady the London physician could say no more than had already been said by Dr. Clifford.

Upon Claud the intelligence came with the force of a thunderbolt, for he had not the smallest idea of Muriel's danger, and even now he could hardly bring himself to realize it.

"Surely you must be mistaken—even doctors make mistakes sometimes!" he exclaimed, starting up eagerly with that desperate clinging to hope that forbids our despairing until the very last shred of doubt has vanished. "She is so young—her constitution is so good—oh! it is cruel—cruel to think of her dying!"

The elder physician gently shook his head—he knew that the Great Destroyer makes no distinction between old and young, often indeed gathered the youngest and fairest from our midst.

"Have other advice—send to London—do all that is possible!" added the Viscount, and Sir James laid his hand on his arm.

"My dear Lord Urwicke, everything that can be done will be—that you may rest assured. But not all the advice in the world can avert the end."

"And what is she dying from?" his voice hollow and strained, as he put the question.

"A form of lung disease, whose origin I am

unable to explain, but I think there must have been an hereditary tendency."

This was the reply the physician gave, but Urwicke's own conscience whispered another answer, and that was, "A broken heart!"

"Would you like to see her?" put in Dr. Clifford. "She has just woken, and is perfectly conscious, and able to speak, but you must control your agitation lest she should suspect its cause."

"Then she does not know her own danger?"

"No, we have deemed it advisable to keep her in ignorance as yet."

Muriel was lying in bed, propped up by pillows, and with some daisy-white shawls wrapped round her, for though it was sultry summer weather she had complained of cold.

Her face was blanched to a dead whiteness, save where the blue shadows had deepened, and her large eyes seemed even more lovely and lustrous than when she had been in perfect health. They met her husband's as he entered, and he came and stood by the side of the bed, raising her nerveless hand, and holding it clasped closely in his.

"Have you been back long?" she asked, faintly.

"No—not half-an-hour. I should have come before—indeed, I would not have gone away at all had I known you were so ill," he answered, making a great effort to repress all outward signs of agitation.

"You could not have done me any good if you had stayed," she said, and gently as the words were uttered, they yet cut like a knife into the heart of him to whom they were addressed.

No, he could not have done her any good, for although he was her husband, no bond of sympathy existed between them. The circle of their lives had never touched, and he was as far removed from her as the vilest stranger.

He thought of Philip Greville, the man he believed she loved, and in that moment there was no bitterness in his heart, only pity; and he wondered whether she would die happier if she saw him once more, and wished him good-bye.

"Have you any wish that it is in my power to gratify?" he said, in a low, earnest voice, bending down over her; "if so, do not hesitate to tell me, and I promise that you shall have it."

She looked a little surprised, but made a faint gesture of negation.

"Is there no one you would like to see?"

"No!" Then with a searching look in his eyes, "That is a strange thing to ask me. What made you think of it?"

He did not answer, and turned away his head to avoid meeting her gaze.

Suddenly he felt a strange sort of quiver stir her fingers as they lay in his.

"I think I understand," she said, slowly, her eyes slightly dilating, and never moving from his, "you imagine I am going to die. Is that it?"

He was silent.

"Are you afraid to tell me? Do you think I shall be frightened?" she continued, with a dim, uncertain smile, and an accent almost surprised in her voice. "There is surely nothing so very terrible in death—nothing to draw back from. It seems to me like a long rest, and—" sinking back on the pillows with a weary movement of unconscious pathos—"I am very tired!"

Yes, tired of her life—tired of the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick—tired of the longing for a love that she told herself would never come—tired of feeling herself a hated burden to the man who called her wife!

The world might be in itself very fair, but what were its beauties to the eyes that only saw them "through a glass darkly"? and that glass the mirror of dull despair!

She was young, but what did her youth promise save a lengthening out of the sad years into a vista of unutterable dreariness!

Surely Arael had come to her in pity for her loneliness; his dark wings, already hovering about her head, would shut out the unhappy future, and bear her away, where both throbbing heart and aching brain would cease to pain, to the land of eternal rest!

"Muriel!" cried Claud, in a very anguish of

desire to prove his repentance for the wrong he had done in marrying her for the sake of the dowry she brought him. "I would willingly lay down my life to save yours. Do you believe me?"

"Yes," she answered, the faintest possible shade of pink drifting into her cheeks, while a look he had not yet learnt to fathom came in her sweet, lustrous eyes. "Why should I doubt your word? But you are wrong in wishing such a thing, for when I am gone"—she broke off, shuddering—who among us can bear to think of the world, when for us individually it shall have ceased!—"when I am gone you will be able to do so much that—"

"Hush!" entreatingly, while he raised his hand to his eyes, and from between the fingers two great drops—the tears of a strong man's agony—forced their way through.

She looked pained—even incredulous at first, and put out her wan, weak fingers to touch the spots they had made on the linen.

"Are those for me?" she asked, her eyes looking at him with grave wonderment; "are you indeed, sorry, so sorry?"

"Sorry! Oh Heaven! how weak language is to express such feelings as mine! The word only gives you a dim idea of what I would say."

She was silent for a few minutes, the pale colour still wavering in her cheeks like the flickering light of a taper inside some delicate alabaster vase.

In accordance with her wishes the bilode had been drawn up, and through the window streamed a narrow silver radiance from the arc of the young moon, set far away in the depths of the star-strewn sky. Muriel's eyes wandered towards it, and she breathed a little sigh.

"Things—the things we have been accustomed to see every day of our lives, look so different when we are gazing on them for the last time," she murmured, almost in a soliloquy. "It seems to me Heaven itself cannot be fairer than this beautiful earth of ours."

"And yet this same earth has given you but little happiness!"

"Not very much," she sighed. "I suppose it must be true we hold very little power either for good or evil in our own hands. There is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough how them as we will!"

She turned her head on one side, and closed her eyes, as with a great weariness. Lord Urwicke rose and smoothed her pillows, touching them with fingers as light and tender as a woman's; and then, moved by an impulse beyond his control, forgetful of Philip, knowing only in this supreme moment that the woman he had grown to love with a love as different from that he had given Sybil as is the gentle glare of artificial light from the radiance of the sun at noon, lay there, dying, he leaned down and pressed his lips to hers in one long, clinging kiss that was at the same time a declaration and a farewell.

"Claud!" she murmured, below her breath, catching her small remaining strength, and raising herself so as to be on a level with him, while her eyes sought his, eagerly, imploringly, wonderingly. "Did I dream, or—are the death mists closing round me already? I thought you kissed me."

Instead of answering, he fell on his knees and buried his face in his hands.

"And it was the first time your lips had ever touched mine," she continued, dreamily. "I wonder—if I had lived—"

She paused, exhausted, and Claud gave her some medicine already poured out in a glass on the table by the bedside, and held her in his arms while she drank it. After he put the glass down, he made no attempt to alter his position, and she never moved her head from where it rested on his shoulder—so close to him that he could follow the course of each blue vein that wandered across her temple, and lost itself beneath the soft dark rings of her hair.

Sir James C— came softly in, looked at her, and then passed on in silence and left husband and wife alone, shaking his head ominously as he joined the other doctor in the dressing-room.

"Human skill can do nothing for her, poor

young thing!" he said, sorrowfully. "It is impossible she can have many more hours to live now."

In the sick chamber was an intense silence, broken only by the ticking of a clock on the shelf, and the fluttering of a moth round the night-light.

Outside the glory of the moonshine had grown wider, and a soft wind had sprung up to wander in long sighs among the faintly shivering leaves, and cause the ivy to touch the window with a sound like the tapping of fingers against the glass. Claud involuntarily shuddered as he heard it.

"If I could only redeem the past!" he muttered to himself.

"The past!—irrevocable, irretrievable, vanished for ever into that dim shadow-land, whose ghosts come back in the after years to vex us with their presence! It is so hard to remember that all we do or say, every word, every action of this now, go to form a volume to which, in the after time, we can neither add to nor take from one single sentence!"

But, oh! surely hardest of all is it, when our beloved are left from us, with all the tenderness that was in our hearts unspoken, uncomprehended! What would we not give to have them back for an hour—one moment even, in which to look in their eyes, to pour out the hot, passionate regret for opportunities wasted, the love that has burnt and seared our very souls with a lava tide, but which, alas! nothing can ever redeem!

"I suppose," Muriel said, presently, opening her eyes, and speaking in weak, disconnected sentences, "Heaven knows best, and—I am content!"

She shivered slightly, and he drew the folds of the shawl about her, and held her closer in his arms, as if he thought the vigorous life flowing in his own veins might impart its warmth to her chill and languid pulses.

Again she closed her eyes, and, after a little while, a calm settled on her face—so white, so still, that Claud's heart sank with the nameless, impalpable fear that even the boldest of us feel when in Death's great presence. Was she, indeed, gone? Had the soul left its fragile earthly tenement, and was that he held to his breast only a mass of clay—cold, feelingless as a marble statue!

A strong shudder shook him, but he did not move, and so the moments wore on, each marked by the ticking of the clock, and, with a strange sort of inconsistency that comes to us even in our times of deepest suffering, some verses he had read were suggested by the sound, and kept on repeating themselves,—

"By day its voice is low and light,
But in the silent dead of night,
Distinct as a passing tinker's fall,
It echoes along the vacant hall,
Along the ceiling, along the floor,
And seems to say at each chamber door—
Forever—never,
Never—forever!

"Through days of sorrow and days of mirth,
Through days of death and days of birth,
Through every swift vicissitude
Of changeable time unchanged it has stood,
And, as if like God, it all things saw,
It calmly repeats those words of awe—
Forever—never,
Never—forever!

"There, in that silent room below,
The dead lay in his shroud of snow
And, in the hush that followed the prayer,
Was heard the old clock on the stair—
Forever—never,
Never—forever,
Never here, for ever there,
Where all parting, pain and care,
And death, and time shall disappear—
Forever there, but never here!

By-and-by, Sir James C— and Dr. Clifford again entered the room together, and stood by the bedside. The former bent down, listened very attentively, and looked in the white, untroubled face.

"How long has she been thus?" he asked, in a whisper.

"About an hour," answered Urwicke, whose face was drawn and haggard in the faint

shadows of the dawning day. "Does it mean death?"

"No," was the reply. "Nature has done for her what physicians could not do. She sleeps, and she will live!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SHE will live!"

Strong man as he was, the revelation of feeling was almost too great for Claud, and, but for the burden in his arms, he would have flung himself on his knees, and poured out such prayers of gratitude as had not been on his lips since he knelt, a little child, at his mother's knee and repeated them after her.

She would live! Heaven had granted his voiceless supplication, and countermanded its dread fiat, and the dark angel, spreading his wings, had withdrawn his mystic presence to let the life that had been so near sinking flicker again—faintly enough at first, but gathering strength day by day, hour by hour, now that it was no longer under the poison's baneful spell.

It was a very slow, very wearisome task this getting well; it meant lying in bed most of the day, being fed on beef tea, port wine, hot-house fruits,—never lifting a hand to help one's self but depending with a child's dependence on other people's ministrations. Nevertheless, it was not wholly unpleasant. True, just at first, Muriel was incredulous that her strength had utterly gone, and would not believe it until she tried to raise herself and found she could not.

But Claud was always near, ready to talk to her, to read to her, to sit by her side watching, while the slumber that did more towards calling health back to that languid frame than all Dr. Clifford's medicine, came with its poppled balm; and in those hours husband and wife looked deeper into each other's souls than they had ever done before, and felt themselves drawn closer together, although even yet a shadow lay between them—for Urwicke still imagined Philip Greville was the man Muriel loved, and this idea naturally caused a certain restraint in his manner of which she could not fail to be conscious.

And now he discovered how great a mistake he had made with regard to his wife. Instead of the cold, passionless, soulless creature he had imagined, he found an intelligence equal, if not superior, to his own. A vivid imagination, full of dreamy, poetical fancies; a mind highly cultured, well read, and capable of close reasoning—in effect, that most perfect of Heaven's creatures, a clever woman—utterly womanly.

How different she was to Sybil, with her wild, ungovernable nature, which acknowledged neither discipline nor any other restraint that did not accord with her own wishes.

He had seen very little of Sybil lately; for although she had made efforts to enter the invalid's room, both the doctor and nurse had opposed it, and Lady Urwicke herself was far from desiring her presence.

"I suppose," said Claud, one morning, as he sat by her couch, and, as he spoke, he half turned away with a shade of embarrassment, "you know Mr. Greville has left Heathcliff Priory?"

"Left? No, I was not aware of it. When did he go?"

"The night you were so ill."

"And where has he gone to?"

"That I can't tell—London, I suppose. It appears in the afternoon he and Sir Jasper had an interview, at which it was arranged he should leave, and so he went that same night, without even wishing anyone good-bye."

"But that was very strange, was it not?" said Muriel, thinking of Haldé. "Something must have happened, otherwise he would never have gone away."

"Why do you think so?" he asked, jealously.

"I have the best of all possible reasons for knowing it," she returned, with unconscious emphasis, as she recalled what the artist had said to her: "a man does not willingly leave the house which contains what he cares most—"

She stopped suddenly, remembering she had no right to betray Philip's confidence, even to her

husband; and Claud naturally put his own interpretation on the unfinished sentence.

When he spoke next there was a coldness in his voice that had not been there for a long time.

"You never asked me what it was took me to London," he observed.

"Business I suppose."

"It was business in a measure. I went to purchase a villa at the Isle of Wight. I thought perhaps we might have some yachting this summer; and, besides, we have been Sir Jasper's guests long enough."

"Quite," she responded, emphatically.

"The rebuilding of the Towers will be finished by the autumn, so we can remain at Cowes until then—that is to say, if you like the sea."

"I love it—I am never tired of watching it."

"And I think you will like the villa as well. It is very pretty, but rather small; however, that will not make much difference, as we need not keep up a large establishment. I have asked Dr. Clifford, and he says you had better go directly you feel strong enough, for the sea breeze is sure to do you good. I shall have the *Bonita* there. By the bye, are you a good sailor?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"That is lucky. We shall be able to have plenty of yachting. You must make haste and get well enough to travel, and in the meantime I'll attend to the arrangements for the journey."

Mr. Darley had been down once to see Lady Urwicke, but did not stay long. He had some gigantic financial speculation on hand, which took up all his time and all his energies, and was of even more importance than his daughter.

Muriel was not sorry. She could but remember the manner in which her marriage had been brought about, and she knew perfectly well to whose disease it was owing. Her father had acted, as he thought, for the best, but he had left out all questions of her happiness in his ambitious calculations.

Lord Urwicke lost no time in acquainting his host with his prospective arrangements.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Sir Jasper, when he heard them. "You must certainly stay until after the wedding."

"And when will that be?"

"Early in September—a very little while, you see."

"But the 'little while' might make all the difference in my wife's health, and that of course, must be my first consideration."

Sir Jasper looked at him rather curiously.

"Certainly; and in the face of such an argument I cannot press you to remain. However, the Isle of Wight is not at the Antipodes, and so you may be able to return if Lady Urwicke is well enough."

"Yes, I suppose Mr. Darrell will be here!"

"I have written to ask him, but, as you know, he is a queer fellow, and has an insurmountable aversion to the neighbourhood of his old home. However, I should think he would conquer it for the sake of such an unique occasion as the marriage of his only daughter."

"Very strange, his leaving the Grange and shutting it up as he did," remarked Urwicke.

"Do you understand his reasons?"

"I fancy the loss of his wife was the principal one, but he was misanthropical even in his youth, and now age and custom have intensified his solitary habits, and made him a complete recluse."

"By the way, have you heard anything of Greville?"

"Not a word. A cavalier fashion of treating us, wasn't it, going off like that!" said Sir Jasper, airily, and he went outside to speak to the butler, just as his sister entered the room.

Lord Urwicke bit his lip with vexation—he would have given a good deal to have avoided a *à-tête* with her at this precise juncture, but there was no help for it—he could not leave the room without absolute rudeness.

"I have just been informing your brother of our approaching departure," he observed.

"Ours! Whose do you mean?" sharply.

"My wife's and my own. We have taxed your hospitality for a long while, haven't we?"

She cast a penetrating glance at him, and answered his question by another.

"When are you going?"

"In about a week if Muriel is strong enough—and she is improving very rapidly."

"Indeed! I have not seen her since her convalescence."

"The doctor thinks it better for her to avoid the excitement of visitors," he said, in excuse for her non-admission to the sick-room; "he has denied Miss Darrell, too."

"But you are there constantly."

"That is a different thing; I am her husband so the cases are not parallel," he answered, gravely.

Sybil grew very pale, and put her hand to her heart as if it pained her.

"You seem to have added devotion to the rôle of late," she said, with unconcealed bitterness.

"Suppose"—a sharp spasm crossing her face—"she had died!"

"She was near enough to death, but, thank Heaven! that danger is now over."

Sybil was standing close beside him. She was silent for a minute, and then put her hand on his arm, and looked straight up into his eyes—a wild sort of appeal in her own.

"You are really thankful this is so—you are glad her life has been spared?" she said in a low intense whisper.

"I am truly, heartily, unfeignedly glad!" he answered, emphatically. "I rejoice as men do when what is dearest to them is snatched from the grave and given back to them!"

Her fingers, one by one, unloosed their clasp; she drew back, a sick despair slowly coming in her face.

He had not meant to be cruel, but if he had taken up a knife, and driven it into her bosom, the pain could not have been deadlier.

"Hold dearest!" she echoed stonily.

"and is she—your wife—the woman you hold dearest?"

"She is."

It was better to be plain with her—better to let her know the truth, so he reasoned, and now felt almost glad the opportunity had been given him for declaring it. Near neighbours as they were, it would be well-nigh an impossibility, that they should not see a good deal of each other in the future, and this being so, it was surely wisdom to clearly define their relative positions, and come to an understanding regarding them that would admit of no mistake.

Sybil's eyes never moved from their earnest study of his face, but she stood a little distance off him, one hand still pressed against her bosom, the other clutching firm hold of the back of a chair.

"I congratulate you on the control you have over your affections. Why," with a short, mirthless laugh, "you seem to have as little difficulty in transferring your love as in changing your coat!"

He moved rather uneasily. Even though he knew his attitude was justified and here was not, he was conscious of a sting in the words.

"Muriel is my wife. Is it not right I should love her?"

"No!" she exclaimed, with a fierce emphasis, her eyes flashing angry fire. "You saw me first, loved me first, would have married me if she had not come in the way, and I claim from you the faith I was willing to give! Do you think that though oceans had rolled between us I should have changed!—should have let another man take the place in my heart you had held! No, no!—a thousand times no!"

To describe the passionate, concentrated vehemence of her voice and manner would be impossible. Her face had become flooded with crimson, her finely-pencilled brows met in a level line above the scornful splendour of her eyes, her breath came in quick, convulsive gasps, her whole frame trembled with intensest agitation.

"For Heaven's sake, calm yourself!" he exclaimed in alarm. "Suppose anyone should come in and see you thus!"

She laughed wildly.

"Let them! I do not care! I have already borne the worst that can befall me!"

Claud Urwicke was an essentially nineteenth-century Englishman, hating with an extreme abhorrence anything that savoured of melodrama being dragged from its legitimate place—the boards of a theatre; and if Sybil had tried her hardest she could not have selected a more effectual method for rooting out his old fancy than the attitude she thus assumed.

It seemed to him that, for the first time, he comprehended her nature as it really was, and now that the glamour of romance had fallen from his eyes, and he was enabled to see clearly, he recoiled with a sensation akin to disgust from this self-abandonment.

It struck him as being low, and his fastidious taste revolted against it. She was nothing more nor less than a beautiful fury, and the sole excuse to be made for her was that she loved him!

"Is it not the truest wisdom to reconcile oneself to the inevitable?" he said, presently.

"According to a man's philosophy—yes."

"Why should not women accept it as well?"

"Because they are fools, and cannot reason. They can only love."

He was silent. Surely, he thought, no man in the world was ever placed in such a position before.

Both by breeding and instinct he was a gentleman; and, fervently as he desired to do it, the task of settling his relations with her on the basis they must in future rest was absolutely repulsive to him.

He wished he had never seen her; he wished he had never brought Muriel to the Priors; he wished women were only amenable to reason like men; and finally and most fervently he wished himself a hundred miles away from that particular spot at that particular minute!

Of course he pitied her, and equally of course was much more inclined to look leniently on her conduct than if she had been the victim of misplaced passion for any other man than himself. All the same, he was heartily glad she was not his wife.

"We are none of us the arbiters of our own destinies," he said at last, a little wistfully. "Everyone has to submit to the force of circumstances."

"And you seem to have found the submission both easy and pleasant," she retorted, her proud lips curling. "You need not make any excuses. I suppose it is the old story of woman's faith and man's falseness; but I little thought that I—I should ever be the victim." She put up her hand, and clasped her throat as if she were choking. "Well"—drawing a deep breath—"I am glad I know the truth; anything is better than inhabiting a fool's paradise."

Whatever her faults—and they, alas, were many and terrible!—this much may be said, her love for Claud Urwicke was true—perhaps the only true thing in her wicked, restless nature.

"I could have borne anything," she added, passionately, after a moment's pause, "anything save being displaced by this woman! If we had been leagues apart I would not have minded. If I had known that never as long as we lived were we fated to set eyes on each other again, I would still have been content; but this—her voice dropping to a low hoarse whisper—"is worst of all—worst of all!"

She thought of the black crimes in which she had steeped her soul in order to keep that which was no longer hers. Her sin had all been of no avail, and retribution had come. Verily,—

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all!"

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1683. BACK NUMBERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

If you pinch your finger, the hurt and the pain are not quite simultaneous; and if your arm were long enough to reach to the sun, it would be one hundred and thirty-two years before you would feel the pain.

NURSE BROWN.

—102—

The dinner was over at Woodcote Farm; the milk was strained into glittering pans on the dairy shelves, and the fowl-house door was locked beyond all chance of danger from chicken-thieves; and, in the soft purple of the gloaming, Mary Grace and her young London visitor had put on their sunbonnets and were climbing the wooded slopes to FURZE HILL.

Mary was a typical country maiden—rosy, fair-haired and plump, not to say commonplace.

Alice Deane was taller and more slender, with large dark eyes, a skin that was transparently pale, and a sweet, serious mouth.

Her dress was far plainer than that of her companion, but there was a certain style in every fold and plait that was lacking in Mary's.

"Oh," cried the latter breathlessly, "don't walk so fast, Alice! Do stop a minute and look around you—at your own ancestral acres!"

"My own ancestral acres!" Alice shrugged her shoulders. "It is all rock and woodland, so far as I can see, and the old house is ready to tumble down at the first gust of wind. Oh, dear, there's an end of my plans about taking boarders and making a little money! No boarder with any regard for his personal safety would ever come to Furze Hill."

Side by side the two girls sat down on the doorstep of the old house.

"It would take," said Alice Deane, looking despairingly about her—"it would take a fortune to put this place into anything like decent repair. And where am I to get money I should like to know! I can't even sell the place. Nobody would buy it. I did think I could make a living out of the old house, but now that I have seen it—" "Oh, Mary, I've seen quite enough of my ancestral halls! Let us go home!"

Mary's attempts at consolation were in vain on the way home.

"Oh, don't talk to me!" said Mary. "I'm a pauper—a beggar. Why on earth wasn't I brought up to a trade, instead of being kept at that genteel boarding-school! I wonder what I am good for!"

"Dear Alice, don't fret," said chubby Mary. "Remember, you are a lady."

"Much good that does me!" said Mary, scornfully. "I couldn't go begging to my relatives if I would, and I wouldn't if I could. I've some pride left. Oh, Mary, don't you know of somebody who wants something done for them, so I can earn my bread?"

"Something will certainly turn up," said Mary, hopefully. "Oh, there is a light in the sitting-room! Someone has come in, and mother has lit the big lamp. I wonder who it can be! Oh, it's only Harry Newton."

Harry Newton was a neighbour—a tall, stalwart young farmer, with a healthy, unburned face and kindly blue eyes.

"It's mother," said he. "She's ill and I am afraid it's diphtheria, and the doctor wants you to write to the nurse you had yourself."

"Oh, Harry!" cried Mary, "what a pity! Is it really diphtheria? But who is to do the house work?"

"Oh, I can manage that myself," said the young man. "If only I could get the nurse."

"I'll write at once," said Mary. "Or, better still, I'll go for her myself. But she comes expensive."

"I don't care for the expense," said the young farmer, "though I know mother will fret about it. But she must have the best of care."

"Is that your Harry Newton?" said Alice Deane, as the tall figure vanished into the twilight. "He's rather good-looking, isn't he?"

But Mary returned from town the next day alone.

"She can't come," said she. "She is engaged in a scarlet-fever case."

"Mary," said Alice, speaking suddenly, "let me go!"

"Go where?"

"To the sick woman—in the place of this

trained nurse. Cousin Sarah had diphtheria once, and the doctor said I took excellent care of her. I would as soon be called Nurse Brown as anything else—and I would so like to be doing something and earning some money!"

Mary looked hesitatingly at her friend.

"It would be awfully hard work," said she.

"All the better!" impatiently cried out Alice.

So the heiress of FURZE HILL went to the Newton's farmhouse in the capacity of a trained nurse, and gave the very highest satisfaction.

"I'm sure, Miss Brown," said good old Mrs. Newton on the day she first sat up in an arm-chair lined with pillows, "I don't know how we can ever pay you for all you have done!"

"I've worked for wages," said the tall, pale "Frank," "and you have given them to me. We are quits."

"No we ain't," said Mrs. Newton. "You've given me my medicine, and all that sort of thing to be sure, but you've done more than that. You've got up early to look after the house; you've cheered up Harry when he was worried about me, and you've read aloud to me, and sung sweet old-fashioned hymns, and many a time when I couldn't sleep for nervousness, when you needed sleep almost worse than I did!"

"Mother," said Harry, who had come in with a brimming pail of milk, and stood close at the trained nurse's side, "it's all true what you say, every word of it. But you haven't said it all. She's going to do more for us than she has done. She's going to stay here all together."

"What!" cried old Mrs. Newton.

"She has promised to be my wife," said Harry, putting one Hercules arm tenderly around the slender waist of the trained nurse. "Eh, mother, what do you say to that?"

"Not if you object," said the girl, her quick eyes reading the changes in Mrs. Newton's face, almost as if they were the letters of the alphabet. "I will enter no family where I am not welcome."

"It ain't that, my dear," said Mrs. Newton, fumbling uneasily with her spectacles. "Welcome! If you was the Queen you couldn't be welcome. But I've had a notion I'd like Harry to marry another woman."

The tall girl in black drew back from the clasping embrace.

"You never told me," she said, quickly, "that you were engaged."

"I'm not," remonstrated Harry. "Oh, what a scrape you're getting me into. For all that dear little mother of mine looks so plain and homespun, she's a deal of pride in her, and she always planned for me to marry Miss Deane, the lady who inherits FURZE HILL. She's a friend of Mary Grace's."

"And I'm sure," struck in the old lady, "that she'd like Harry if she were to see him."

"So am I," murmured the trained nurse.

"And there ain't no fine lady a bit too good for him," added the eager mother.

"No, indeed there isn't," said the girl. "You are right, Mrs. Newton—I am willing to give up all my claims in favour of this Miss Deane."

"If I had a dozen other sons, my dear," said Mrs. Newton, "you should have 'em all; but it's hard for an old woman to forget her lifelong plans, and—and—"

"I am quite willing that he should marry Miss Deane," quietly repeated the nurse.

Harry smote his closed hand on the table with an energy that everything on it jumped.

"It appears to me," said he, "that I'm left quite out of the question in all these arrangements. I want you to understand that I won't be given up! Do you hear! Won't! No, mother—I'd do a deal to please you, but you'll never have the young lady of FURZE HILL for your daughter-in-law!"

"Yes, she shall!" cried out the girl falling on her knees beside the old lady, and hiding her face in her lap, while the rosy blushes mounted to the very roots of her hair. "And you will have to marry Miss Deane after all, Harry, for I am Alice Deane! Oh, please to forgive me, for I have been deceiving you all along!"

And she told them the whole story, half-laughing, half-crying.

"I am heiress to nothing at all," she said,

"but a few barren acres and a tumble-down house. But, such as it is, if Harry will have me—"

"It don't make a pin's worth of difference to me," said the sturdy young farmer. "It's you I love, and you I mean to have, whether you call yourself Alice Deane or Nurse Brown."

And old Mrs. Newton declared that she never was so happy in all her life!

[THE END]

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

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CHAPTER XV.

It was true all O'Hara said—he would have died for her. He loved her so dearly, with all the passion and fervour of his fiery Celtic nature. What were other women to him! Nothing. He would never again glow and thrill with passion at the glance of a bright eye, the touch of a soft lip—all that was over for him for ever. Life stretched before him a terrible waste—an awful wilderness. All hope and joy was wrung from it; a dead blank faced him. He knew that he had nothing to look forward to, save a future full of pain and dark despair. Each day would rise for him dull, dreary, tasteless, unblissed by the presence of the only being who could have glorified them, turned his existence into one long pleasure.

How could she have forgotten him and all his wealth of devoted affection so soon, he wondered! Absent from her he had kept her memory green within his heart, had dreamt dreams in which she alone figured—thought always of her, and she had forgotten him in less than six months, proved herself false to the core; had fled away with another man, sending not a single word to him, to warn him of what was coming to soften the blow of her desertion.

Oh! it was bitter! bitter! The man's very blood seemed to turn to gall, as he realised what the loss meant for him—how cruelly he had been deceived! A mad, murderous wrath surged in his heart, a wild desire for revenge, a horrible hatred of the man who had won her from him.

"Who—who—is it!" he asked, hoarsely, raising his head, and looking at the woman who stood opposite him, cool, calm, regarding him as a doctor might an animal under vivisection.

"Who is what?" she rejoined, knowing perfectly well what he meant.

"Who—is it—she—has married!"

"What do you want to know for?"

"That is my affair. Will you tell me?"

"Well—I suppose so if you want to know. If I don't somebody else will."

"Who is it, then?"

"Sir Lionel Molyneux."

"Ah! Caught by a title and the length of his money bags!" he said, giving vent to a dreadful mirthless laugh—worse, far worse than tears—"and the grand house. Perhaps if I had had the good fortune to be born a marquis with a long rent-roll, and an ancestral seat, possessed of all the means of gratifying her vanity, she might have been true to me."

"I think not," rejoined Maud, feeling that she could add another pang to those he was enduring.

"Why not? One man with plenty of money is just as good as another to a woman of her sort."

"I hardly think so. She really loved Sir Lionel, with her whole heart and soul; for you she entertained a mere girlish evanescent affection."

O'Hara's hands clenched at her words. It was so hard to hear this, to know he had never possessed her love—only a lukewarm, weak apology for it—after having poured out the treasure of his at her feet.

It went like a fiery stab of pain through him, searing his soul, leaving him more reckless—more desirous of revenge.

"Perhaps you are right," he agreed quietly, controlling himself with a mighty effort; "and

if you are, it may be all the better for the man who has been base enough to steal her from me."

"Don't blame Sir Lionel," she said, quickly. "Why not? And if I don't blame him, who shall I censure? You!"

He put the question at random, little knowing how near the mark he was, for he was very free from conceit, and never dreamt that Maud had cared for him so much in the old days when he first came to Wingfield, and that his transferring his attentions to her sister would make her so bitter against her.

"By no means," she answered, smiling suavely, though her cheek lost some of its rich bloom. "Don't blame anyone, only fate."

"And why not Sir Lionel?"

"Because he did not know that she was engaged in a way, did not know that she had a lover before himself."

"I see. It was all kept from the rich man lest he should take fright and run away," he said, scornfully.

"There was no fear of his running away; he was too much in love for that."

"In that case you might have dealt fairly by me—have given me a chance. Why was I not told?"

"Well," she answered, slowly, not wishing to acknowledge her own guilt, for there was an ugly scowling light burning in O'Hara's eyes that meant mischief to someone, "you know what Maggie is? She never cares to do anything that will entail pain on others, and—"

"Does she not?" he broke in, fiercely, unable to restrain the unquenchable sense of wrong that possessed him. "Her conduct hardly looks like it. She has entailed a life-long misery on me."

"Don't be too hard on her, Terence."

"Too hard on her? Oh, Heaven! As though anything would be bad enough for a woman who lets a man lay his heart at her feet and then tramples on it, killing all that is best in him—turning the sweet well-springs of life to gall and wormwood, condemning him to an existence full of misery. Too hard on her! No, I won't be too hard, but I will have my revenge, and it shall be ample."

"Nonsense, Terence. You are talking rubbish," said Maud, quickly, laying her hand on his arm.

"It is no nonsense. I mean it," he retorted grimly, shaking off her touch.

"You can't. You are indulging in heroics," she went on, eagerly and glibly, though she was very white, and her hands shook like aspen leaves. "People don't have revenge in the nineteenth century."

"Other people may not, I intend to."

"Why should you? The child was sorry, very sorry."

"Perhaps."

"She could not help loving another man. Love comes unsought."

"It does, curses on it!" he cried, wildly.

"Then you should forgive her."

"Perhaps I may some day, when my revenge is satisfied."

"To forgive, really, you should forego revenge."

"I can't do that," he rejoined, with an awful hollowness in his voice. "It is all I have to live for now."

"You might have heaps of other things to live for if you chose."

"What—what has she left?"

There was inexpressible dreariness in his tone.

"You might love again."

"Never!"

"Oh, yes, you might," persisted Maud, recovering her usual insouciance, "and a woman possibly that will suit you a great deal better than Maggie would."

"By the way," she added, a moment later, "she left the ring you gave her with me to return to you. Here it is," she continued, drawing it from her pocket and offering it to him. "Won't you take it?"

"No, it would be useless to me."

"I should advise you to. May come in useful you know, to give to some other fickle fair one. There it is. I don't want the trumpery thing," and she tossed it towards him with an air of dis-

dain. The words and action seemed to sting him with a fiery pain, great as though she had thrust thorns into his wounded, aching heart.

He ground the ring down into the earth under an angry heel, battering out of all shape and form the shabby little love-token; then without another word he strode swiftly away, mad with the anguish of a wild despair, feeling that Heaven and hope had deserted him.

His strength and vigour seemed to have left him—he went along in a blind, faltering way, and the woman watching him saw him stumble as he went recklessly on. Out of the little wicket-gate, down the rural lane, past Stretton's oak, where he had parted from Maggie a few short months before, on, on into the outer world, which was destined to be such a joyless one to him for ever and aye.

"Glad he's gone," soliloquised Maud, as his figure became lost in the shadows of approaching evening. "Didn't like the look of him at all. Dangerous, very, just now. Hope he'll get over it. It will be more than awkward if he turns up here and molests Maggie. He has the game pretty well in his own hands, as Lionel knows nothing about him, and if he chooses can make things extremely unpleasant for all parties. I must manage not to be found out though. That would never do. I don't want to receive the benefit of his wrath, and it would cause disagreeable complications with Maggie and her husband. What a fool he was to have pinned his faith on a woman—they are not to be trusted."

"I found she was false, tho' she promised me fairly, Sing boy down, he down, derry down dee; And women, I trow, are like weather-cocks—rarely. They're fixed to one point, so acquiescent they be."

Yes, we are like weather-cocks, and I don't suppose we can help it," and continuing the song, she went slowly up to the house, gathering some flowers on her way, and then with one look at the swiftly darkening sky she went into the old parlour, and drew the curtains, and heaped the fire high with coal, and ensconced herself comfortably in the great Chippendale chair before it, sipping the tea Anne brought her, pulling the little Lion dog's ears, as he sat on her lap, building her castles in the air, and putting aside all thought of the man who had just left her, whose life she had ruined and laid waste, whose hopes she had marred, whose future she had made bare and barren.

CHAPTER XLV.

WELCOME HOME.

"WELL, Laura, after all, you will be disappointed. They are not coming home until after Christmas," remarked Maud one morning, some three months later.

"I am very sorry to hear it. My poor people will suffer for it this hard winter. I hoped Sir Lionel would return soon and co-operate cordially in all our plans and endeavours to ameliorate the condition of his tenants, and lessen their sufferings during this bitter weather."

"Well, he is going to do so."

"How?"

"By sending money. Maggie says," continued Maud, referring to a letter that lay before her on the table, "that there is a hundred pounds at the bank in Inchfield to papa's credit, and we are to use it as we think best, and go to Green for an unlimited supply of coals and blankets."

"How good of him! That is a grand Christmas-box for his people."

"Yes," remarked Kate, looking up from the work she was occupied with, "we shall be able to do a great deal with such a sum as that. His absence will not be felt."

"Where are they now?" she inquired, a minute later.

"At Naples. Listen, what she says. What a lucky girl she is!"

"We are still here; it is such a lovely place. Last week we went over to Cetara, a fishing town

about forty miles off, in the Bay of Salerno. I shall never forget the first saw it. It was evening, and the last glory of sunset was flashing the vine-clothed hills, the white houses, and the lofty cliffs with a rosy glow, flaming through a hollow of the hills lighting up the restless, glittering sea, and the great black rocks that reared on high their shaggy crests, dyeing them with a thousand rainbow hues, holding in check for a time the purple mists of approaching twilight; while over the water, borne on the balmy breeze, came the sweet, sad monotones of the fisher-folk, singing as they cast their nets around. We only stayed a few days, as everything there is rather primitive, but I was quite sorry to leave. We start to-morrow for Nice, and then we go to Monaco, which we have not yet visited; and, as I am curious to see the violets, Lionel is going to take me. We go to Paris for Christmas and the *tour de s'an*, and then to Rome for the Carnival. We have an invitation from the Princess Maccaletti to go to her balcony, where we shall see everything. Li won't let me join the throng on the Corso, though we have been offered seats in more than one carriage, so I shall have to content myself in the Princesses' balcony, and peep the crowds beneath with content, from that elevated perch. I wish you were with us now; I am sure you would like Nice. The Promenade des Anglais is so lovely, with its luxuriance of bloom, on a brilliant day—and almost every day is sunny here in these southern climes—with a background of orange trees, lux groves, and laurels, and a sky of deep glowing sapphire, very different from the pale blue or leaden grey we are accustomed to in old England—"

"I wish I was with her," commented Maud, breaking off for a moment, and then beginning again further down.

"I am going to order you a dress each in Paris. What would you like? Write and tell me, and ask Kate and Laura if theirs shall be 'going away' ones. Li is so generous, I have more money than I know what to do with; therefore don't scruple to tell me exactly what you would like, and if the girls want any little nick-nacks for their trousseaus let me know—"

"How kind!" murmured the bride elect.

"Let me know also"—went on the letter—"when the day is definitely fixed, for of course we shall return to England and be present at the ceremony. I hope, however, that it will not be until the end of February or beginning of March, because if we have time, after we leave Rome, we want to go to Vallambrosa. Li has told me so much about the convent, and the crone at the Forestiera, who, he says, is so much like a witch, that he always expects to see her mount astride a broomstick and go flying through the air, that I am dying to visit the place, so be sure and let me know soon. And with love from both of us to papa and all,

"Ever your affectionate sister,
"MAGGIE."

"Now, my dears," said Maud, briskly, as she folded up the epistle; "make up your minds what you will have by to-morrow, as I intend to write to her ladyship then. And am I to tell her definitely that the happy day is fixed for the 6th of April?"

"Yes," assented the others.

And so a letter went off to Nice containing the news, and a description of the dresses required; and Maggie was so pleased at her presence not being required in England till April, and at being able to go to Vallambrosa, that she gave a very large order to M. Worth for gowns for her sisters, and was lavishly generous in the way of boots and gloves and perfumes—so lavish, indeed, that when they arrived at Folkestone she found herself with only a few shillings in the dainty purse she carried, and had to ask some from her husband.

"How much!" he inquired, with a smile.

"Oh, five pounds will be ample," she answered; "you know at Molyneux I shall not want to spend money."

"I think you had better have twenty. You will have frequent calls on your generosity there, and will have to play the part of Lady Bountiful."

"Shall I?"

"Of course, my love. Do you think you will be equal to the part?"

"I shall try," she replied, with a little sigh; "but I was never very good at that sort of thing. I think I am too lazy."

"Little lotus-eater," laughed her husband, pinching the blooming cheek pressed against his arm; "and you shall continue to be lazy if you like. I must get a curate to assist your father, and shall choose a married one, whose wife will dispense your charities, and take all trouble off your shoulders in that way."

"That is good of you, Li. Dad is getting rather old now, and finds the work come heavy."

"I suppose so; and he will feel lonely too, when Maud marries. Clinton will be back to claim her as soon as he can possibly get leave."

"Yes. You mean the curate and his wife to live at the Parsonage?"

"Yes. Do you think it would be a good plan?"

"Capital, if you could get a really religious, active-minded man, and a woman who would take an interest in parish matters. The poor folk in the village will miss Laura terribly."

"Yes; she is a regular good Samaritan."

"I wish I was like her."

"How do you mean?"

"As energetic over the distribution of comforts to the needy—able to go into their cottages and find out their wants, and read to them, &c."

"I am afraid, dear," rejoined the Baronet, with a slight smile, "that you would hardly have time for all that. Your position entails many duties of another kind. You will have to entertain a great deal, and you will find that will leave you little leisure."

"Will it?" said Maggie, somewhat relieved, feeling much better able to play the rôle of hostess than that of Lady Bountiful.

"Indeed it will."

"Are you glad to get back?" he asked, later on in the day, as they drove through the beautiful grounds that lay around the Hall, amid the cheers and shouts of the tenants and the children of the village, who tossed great bunches of violets and snowdrops into the carriage, and strewed primroses and spring blossoms along the road, while a merry chime rang from the old church steeple, and the birds sang gaily, and the steady sunshine made it almost balmy as summer.

"Very glad," she answered, with a joyous smile. "It is your home and mine"—how tenderly she accented the word—"and I love it better than any place in the whole world."

"Better than Rome with all its treasures and beauties?"

"Yes."

"Better than Nice, and its glowing sky and its luxuriance of bloom and blossom?"

"Yes."

"Better than Cetara, the little place you were so mad about?"

"Yes, even better than Cetara, and is it not worthy of my best affections? Is it not a grand old place? Have we seen anything to equal it in all our travels?"

"Perhaps not, love," he assented, pleased at her admiration of his ancestral home, as we looked at the peaked gables of the grey, time-worn building, which was looking its best beneath the beautifying rays of the spring sun, as indeed was all around.

The soft wind was fanning the bee from its hiding-place, by opening in sheltered nooks little clusters of fragrant violets, and putting honey in the baskets of the dazling gorse flowers.

Myriads of the tiny green leaf-buds were peeping out; the little daisies were shaking their silver frills amid the springing grasses; the burning gold of the crocus made a warm glow, amid the white, cloudy snowdrops; the speckled thrush and lute-voiced blackbird were calling to each other; a lark was singing far beyond the clouds; the rooks in the tall beeches were busy building, and their cawing and wrangling almost

drowned the notes of the tuneful chorister, soaring up—up into space.

"There seems to be quite a regiment waiting to welcome us," remarked the Baronet, as they drew nearer and could see the figures on the terraces.

"Yes, they are going to give you a warm welcome."

"May it be a happy home-coming to you, dearest," he murmured.

"And to you, dear Lionel," she answered, lifting the starry eyes he loved to gaze at to his.

"Thanks," and he pressed her little fingers with one hand, while he lifted his hat with the other, in response to the salutes and cheers he was receiving; and then, as the carriage stopped, he made a short speech, thanking his people for their kindly greeting and warm welcome, and giving his arm to his bride led her to the terrace where the Dowager Lady Molyneux and Eunice and Mr. Randal and his daughters stood.

"Welcome home, my son," said his mother, kissing him, and scanning eagerly his handsome face, which looked as bright and happy as she could wish to see it.

"Thanks, dear mother," he replied, stooping to return her kiss.

"And you, Maggie," to his wife, who stood blushing and smiling, a slight, girlish shape in rich velvets and costly furs, looking like anything but a titled matron.

"Thanks," she murmured also, after a swift embrace, turning to her father and sisters, who soon bore her away from the bustle and tumult outside, to the quiet of the blue boudoir.

"How do you like being married?" asked Kate, after the bride was divested of her aubies and "five o'clock tea" brought in, and she lay resting amid the silken cushions of a deliciously easy chair.

"I like it very well," she replied, smiling at the three eager faces.

"Of course you do," said Maud, promptly; "who wouldn't under the same circumstances? I should, I know. An adoring husband—heaps of money—everything you can possibly desire."

"Yes, everything I can possibly desire," she echoed, gazing dreamily out at the park where the deer herded, and at the sweep of woodland, and the silvery sheen of the river.

"Lucky girl! I hope I shall be equally blessed."

"I hope you will, Maud, and I see no reason why you should not be. Clifford Clinton is sure to make a most kind and indulgent husband."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed his fiancée, "still I shall not be 'my lady.'"

"You can't have everything," rejoined Maggie, with a sweet, rippling laugh, full of glad content.

"Why not? I have 'everything.'"

"Yes, but I am particularly fortunate—exceptionally blessed. Clinton is rich, handsome, amiable. What more could any woman desire?"

"Well, she could desire more, but—"

"But," broke in Kate, "she should not do so. Those three things ought to be quite enough to satisfy any woman."

"Then I presume you are satisfied?"

"Quite so. Though Mr. Thornton is by no means handsome, or so rich as your intended, still I am quite content, and thankful that I have won his love."

"Yes, of course," grumbled Maud, "that is always the way with you. If you only possessed two gowns, and somebody stole one, you would be very much obliged that they didn't take both, and congratulate yourself thereon."

"Naturally."

"Isn't that the proper thing to do?" asked Lady Molyneux.

"Yes, I suppose so, only I could never bring myself to that charitable and contented frame of mind. I should bemoan my lost gown and try to discover the thief in order to punish him."

"Waste of time. Kate's is the best mode of action. And now tell me all the news. Who is staying here?"

"The Comte de Villefille, Henriette Clifford, Mr. Thornton and one or two others, and Lady Molyneux and Eunice."

"My mother and Eunice!" exclaimed Maggie, calling her by the endearing title she liked, "staying here! I am surprised at that, and the Dower House only a couple of miles away."

"They don't live at the Dower House."

"Don't live there! Why not?"

"It is rather damp, and has been so long unused that they thought it was better not to."

This was not the truth. Lady Molyneux was afraid to live at the quaint old house among the woods, afraid that her son, who was very much attached to her, and who would often go to see her, might, during one of his visits, discover the padded room, and so find out that there was madness in the family, and she knew but too well that the knowledge would prove fatal to his sanity. Brooding over it, thinking of it, dreading it, would make him a lunatic. The doctors said his only chance was to keep him in ignorance of the dreadful malady which threatened him.

"Where have they gone to, then?" asked Maggie, after a pause, during which a cloud had fallen over her bright face, and stolen into her violet eyes.

"They have taken the Rosary."

"They have not gone very far."

"No, not much more than a mile."

"I wish they had remained here. I feel as though I had driven them out."

"What nonsense! You are his wife, and Lady Molyneux very properly said that young married people are better alone, without any of their relatives to interfere with them, at any rate, at first. And you need not pity them, for the Rosary is a delightful place. The high private hedge that surrounds it conceals it from view. I had no idea it was so charming. Just picture to yourself a long low house, with porch, walls, and windows covered with roses, that cluster round and peep in at the narrow casements, and climb up even to the pointed gables, mingled with honeysuckles and great fuschias nailed against the time-worn grey stones, and low celled, black-beamed, old-fashioned rooms, and a garden with a smooth, grassy lawn, and full of lovely flowers."

"The description is perfect—quite an Arcadian residence."

"Quite," assented Maud, glibly.

"All the same, though, I would rather have them here. There is plenty of room in this vast place. We should not have interfered with each other much."

"No. Well, some day I daresay you will have your mother-in-law to come to live with you."

"When will that be?"

"When Eunice marries."

"Is she going to be married?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Hasn't the Comte proposed yet?"

"He may have proposed, but she has evidently not accepted him, as no engagement has been announced."

"Is he still as much in love?"

"More so, and I can't understand why she won't have him. He would be a very good match even for her. I believe he has a splendid place at Marseilles."

"Yes, Lionel has stayed there with him. He is quite a millionaire. Keeps a yacht and racers, and indulges in all sorts of extravagances. I quite thought it would have been all settled by this time, and that three brides would stand at the altar on Thursday," and Lady Molyneux looked at the brides elect.

"Perhaps she doesn't care to marry a Frenchman and live out of England, observed quiet Laura, who seldom or never got a chance of saying a word when Maud was present, as that talkative young woman generally monopolised the whole of the conversation.

"Perhaps that is it. Though other countries are very lovely and bright and sunny still; there is no place like England. I should be very loth to leave it and make my home elsewhere," said Maggie, her eyes wandering once more to the view of wood and hill and stream, over which the dusk of the early spring night was creeping.

"I don't think it is because of that," re-

marked Kate, looking very wise as she spoke of her friend.

"What is it, then?" demanded the second Miss Randal, promptly.

"I believe she has seen someone else that she likes, or thinks that she likes better than the Comte."

"Why?"

"Because she used to speak as though she intended to marry him before her visit to town this last winter, and since then she has grown cool to him, and is smitten, I am certain, with the attractions of a fascinating and handsome artist she met while away."

"A handsome artist," cried Maud and Maggie, simultaneously. "Who is he? What is his name?"

"I don't know. I don't remember her ever having told me," replied their elder sister, calmly, little knowing the anxiety both felt, and the relief they experienced at not hearing the name they dreaded.

"It may only be a fancy," said her ladyship, after a pause, during which the cloud had deepened on her face and in her eyes. "She will return to her first love when it is past."

"Perhaps so. I hope she will. He would be a better match for her than an artist."

"Yes, they are always poor wretches," sneered Maud.

"Not always," objected Kate. "Sometimes they make big fortunes, and win fame as well, and are highly desirable acquaintances."

"Sometimes, not often."

"I think you are prejudiced against them."

"Not in the least," she retorted, quickly, though a deep flush rose to her cheek and burnt there furiously, for she knew that her calm, sedate elder sister had long ago guessed how much she had once liked, and how equally much she now hated, Terence O'Hara.

"Have you heard lately from Captain Clinton?" asked Maggie, quite unconscious of the cause of Maud's evident annoyance, still wishing to create a diversion.

"Yes. I heard two days ago."

"How is he getting on?"

"Very well indeed."

"Any chance of his coming back soon?"

"I am afraid not. He won't be able to get leave for another year or six months."

"And you don't intend to go out to him?"

"No. That part of the country is in too disturbed a state—and there is the dressing-bell," she added.

"Isn't it?" cried her ladyship, jumping up quickly, and showing very little of the dignity her state and position demanded. "I must run off and make haste. I wonder what Brenshaw has found for me to wear, Laura. Kate, you must come to my room after dinner. I shall plead fatigue and leave Maud to take my place and entertain my guests. I want to have a long, quiet chat with you, and to give you the things I brought from Paris. You must slip away quietly and come up to me. Won't you?"

"Yes."

They both agreed, and when the long, stately dinner came to an end, and the ladies were in the drawing-room, Lady Molynoux noticed that Maggie was looking pale, and advised her to go to bed, as she must be tired after her long journey; and Maggie at once seized the opportunity, and left the room with Laura, making a sign to Kate to follow; and when the three were alone together, she showed them all the treasures she had bought while abroad, and gave them the pretty quick-knacks she had purchased for them, and two beautiful Brussels lace veils, which three days later adorned their heads and hid their blushes, as they stood at the altar and pledged their troths respectively to Walter Landon and Richard Thornton in the little grey, ivy-grown church at Wingsfield.

CHAPTER XVII.

"DID HE FORGIVE?"

"How would you like a few weeks in town?" asked Sir Lionel a fortnight later, coming into the blue boudoir, where his wife sat, with a delicate

piece of work in her hand.

"I should like it very much," she replied at once.

"You won't mind leaving the country now, when it is looking its fairest and brightest?"

"Not to go with you. I would rather be in town with you than here without you."

"You darling," he ejaculated, kissing her with the old lover-like fervour that six months of matrimony had in no wise cooled.

"You have business there, I suppose?"

"Yes. I must go for two or three days, and as I have to take the trouble of going at all, I thought you might as well come too. I don't care to part with you for even forty-eight hours, you little witch; and of course you won't care to take a lot of smart gowns up to town for the space of three days, so we will stay, if you would like it, a month or two."

"I should like it immensely," she reiterated.

"Very well. Then I will send Green up to look out for a furnished house. He will know what will suit us. You can be ready next week!"

"Yes."

"Perhaps Eunice would like to go also. She will be company for you, as I shall have to leave you a good deal."

"Yes. I should like to have her with me."

"And Maud also?"

"Thanks. It is very good of you to make the suggestion, but she goes to Florence in a few days with aunt."

"Really! You don't mean to say that Mrs. Pattison is going to spend money on travelling?" laughed the Baronet, who knew how close the old lady was, and how little she cared to part with her money.

"She wouldn't if she could help it, you may be sure; but her lungs are affected, and the doctors have ordered her to the south at once."

"Oh, I see. That accounts for the unwonted extravagance."

"Exactly so. I don't envy Maud."

"Nor I."

"Aunt will go in the cheapest and most uncomfortable manner possible."

"I suppose so. Here she comes," he added, as Miss Randal appeared on one of the lower terraces, making her way slowly towards the blue boudoir. "I must tease her about the tour."

"Well, Maud," he began, the moment she came in, "I hear you are going to have a great treat."

"What is that?" she asked.

"A tour in foreign parts, under delightful circumstances."

"Oh, don't talk about it," she replied, making a little moue of disgust. "It is too awful to think of."

"Don't you think you will enjoy yourself very much?"

"No, I am sure I shan't. Aunt will take rooms in some dark, dirty little street, and saunter out once or twice a day for a stroll on the Piazza della Signoria. That will be the beginning and end of my enjoyment."

"Ah, but only think you will be in a city full of memories of the past; where Michael Angelo lies, where Luca della Robbia worked, where Lorenzo the Magnificent lived, where Savonarola suffered."

"Yes, I know; but that won't do me any good."

"It will do you this much good, there will be heaps of places of interest to see. You must take a peep at the Palace of the Uffizi, the Duomo and the Campanile, and St. Marco, embellished with the frescoes of Fra Angelico—then—"

"Don't, don't!" she interrupted, covering her ears with her hands. "I don't want to hear about all these things. I shall never be able to persuade my chaperon to go, and the disappointment will be all the greater if I know what I am losing."

"Well, I won't tantalize you, then. I'll go out and so avoid the temptation, which I must acknowledge is very great. Good-bye for the present," and taking his hat he stepped out on to the terrace, where Rufus was waiting for him,

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basking in the sun, and, accompanied by his great dog, he sauntered slowly away.

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1885. BACK NUMBERS
CAN STILL BE HAD.

FACETIÆ

FRIEND: "I suppose you know all your mistress's secrets by this time?" The Maid: "Why, I know the real colour of her hair."

"I UNDERSTAND that old Gotrox made his fortune out of a simple invention." "No. Out of a simple inventor."

Biggs: "What business is your son in?"
Higgs: "He's a contractor." Biggs: "What line?" Higgs: "Debris."

THE HOUSEWIFE: "Your wife sick? Didn't you tell me last week she was dead?" The Tramp: "Yes, mum! but I've married again."

BERTIE: "Be mine, darling! You are the light of my life!" Geraldine: "Yes, dear; but papa doesn't think you are a good match for me."

"Is this a fast train?" the passenger called out. "Yes!" replied the guard. "I thought so. Would you mind getting out to see what it is fast to?"

NELLY: "I don't see how getting one's feet wet causes toothache." Jack: "You don't? If you had ever had a tooth pulled you would know that the roots run clear to your toes."

MRS. CAUSTIQUE (to her hostess): "Good-night, I've enjoyed myself immensely." Mr. Caustique (as they depart): "Which means, I suppose, that you have found plenty to criticize."

MOTHER: "Did you meet any strangers at the reception?" Daughter: "Only one, a sea captain, and he made me very tired." "Did he talk shop?" "No; he talked ship."

"WHENEVER I see Abraham I am reminded of the proverb that those whom the gods love die young." "But he's five-and-seventy if he's a day." "Exactly. That's just my point."

"I COULDN'T get a policy from that insurance company." "Rejected!" "Yes, I don't ride a wheel and all pedestrians are now considered extra-hazardous risks. As I'm near-sighted in one eye they wouldn't risk me at all."

"ELLA, you have been playing all the afternoon with these toy soldiers. That's not a proper amusement for a b'g girl like you." "Bat mamma, I am not playing with the soldiers. -I picked out the officers and played with them."

JINKS: "Well, I see the French didn't succeed in hissing down the Wagner opera." Winks: "Of course not. Nothing less than a thunderstorm or a dynamite explosion can down Wagner after the orchestra gets its second wind."

"TIMMINS, do you know anything about literature?" "No." "Know anything about art?" "Nothing." "Know anything about music?" "Not a rap." "Good. Come over to my room, pick out a pipe, and let's enjoy ourselves."

MRS. BENHAM: "I believe there is a burglar in the pantry where I put the pies and cakes I made to-day. Why, what are you stuffing the pillow into your ears for?" Benham: "I don't want to hear the death-rattle in his throat."

Mr. J.: "What would you suggest, doctor, for insomnia?" Dr. Pillsbury: "I would suggest that you attempt to sit up with a sick man and give him his medicine every hour for a few nights."

PAPA: "Now, Johnny, I have whipped you only for your own good. I believe I have only done my duty. Tell me truly, what do you think yourself?" Johnny: "If I told you what I think, you'd give me another whacking!"

"WHAT are you going to do with that silver-plated revolver of mine?" asked the languid husband. "I am going to use it to drive the wolf from the door," replied the energetic wife. Whereupon she took it to the nearest pawnshop and got five shillings on it.

"My dear husband, it is certainly very unjust in you to abuse mothers-in-law so. There are good ones." "Well, well, never mind! I haven't said anything against yours — only mine!"

"YES, my hands are soft," said young De Dudley, as a small party the other night, as he gazed at his useless appendages. Then he added: "Do you know how I do it? I always sleep with my gloves on." "And do you sleep with your hat on, too?" asked a pert young lady. "Oh, no," answered the dude. And then he could not imagine what the company were smiling about.

At a cricket-match played in the park of a well-known baronet it was necessary to secure the services of one of the footmen as umpire. In due course the baronet went in, and the second ball delivered the baronet stopped with his leg, and the cry of "How's that!" was raised. It was the footman on whom rested the decision, and, turning to his master, he said, in a half-apologetic tone: "I'm afraid I must say 'Not at home,' Sir John." "Not at home?" retorted the baronet: "what do you mean!" "Well, then, Sir John," replied the footman, "if you will have it, I mean that you're hont!"

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LINES.

SOCIETY.

THE Queen will probably stay in the Isle of Wight for about five weeks, proceeding to Balmoral for the autumn either on Thursday, August 24th, or on Tuesday the 29th.

THE Queen will give two banquets in the Durbar Room at Osborne in honour of the visit of the German Emperor. The season at Cowes promises to be in every way exceptionally brilliant, if the weather is, as it usually proves, propitious.

AMONG other gifts to the little five-year-old Prince on his last birthday was a splendid collection of Hussars, absolutely perfect in every detail of dress. It is the Duke of York's wish that his eldest son should be a Hussar, and the wee man is already well acquainted with the accoutrements of his future regiment.

PRINCE WALDEMAR OF DENMARK will sail in September on a voyage to Siam, China, and Japan, in command of the Danish cruiser *Valkyrien*, and, according to present arrangements, he is to be accompanied by his nephew Prince Charles. If this plan is carried out, Princess Charles will return to England from Copenhagen in October with the Princess of Wales, and will stay with her parents at Marlborough House and at Sandringham during the absence of her husband from Denmark.

THE Duke of Fife has forbidden the people on his estate to take lodgers, and there has been a good deal of grumbling in consequence. It is impossible not to sympathize with the Duke in the matter, for it seems that the new regulation made by him was owing to the vulgar curiosity of many of the tourists who, in their desire to see Royalty, have caused much annoyance to the Duchesse, constantly stopping the children in their walks and sometimes even going so far as to kiss them. In fact, the nuisance was so great that a special gillie had to be told off for the protection of the children.

A COUNCIL of the leading members of the Russian Imperial Family (including the Emperor Nicholas, the Empress Dowager, the Grand Duke Michael Nicolaievitch, and the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch) was recently held at St. Petersburg, at which it was intimated that the Grand Duke George, second brother of the Emperor, has formally renounced his right of succession to the throne in consequence of the precarious state of his health.

It is a curious fact that there are at the present time so many European rulers who have no direct heir in the third generation, and in some cases there is no successor in the second generation. The Grand Duke of Hesse has no son, and as his uncles are both of them married morganically they are cut off from the line of succession, so that in the event of His Royal Highness dying without a male heir the Grand Duchy will fall to the line of Hesse-Cassel, as the daughters cannot succeed. The Duke of Anhalt has three surviving sons, but no grandson to succeed him, so that the line seems doomed to die out in the next generation. In Coburg the Duke will again be succeeded by a nephew, as was the case when the late Duke Ernst died. In Baden the Grand Duke has no grandson, and unless Prince Max of Baden should marry and have a son, there is no heir in the third generation for the country. The heir to the King of Bavaria is his uncle. In Belgium there is only one life in the third generation, that of Prince Albert of Flanders, who is as yet unmarried. Italy was also in a very bad way until the birth of the son of the Duke of Aosta. In Luxembourg there are only daughters, and the only brother of the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, Prince Nicholas of Nassau, is morganically married, and is, therefore, cut off from the succession. The Queen of the Netherlands is the last of her line, and her subjects are most anxious to see her suitably married and the succession ensured. In Austria the heir to the Empire is the nephew of the Emperor, who is unmarried and in delicate health. In Saxony the King will be succeeded by his nephew.

STATISTICS.

THE French people still fight on an average 4,000 duels every year.

THE flower trade of London exceeds in value £2,000,000 per annum.

SWITZERLAND has 1,693 hotels for tourists, with 88,000 beds and 24,000 employes.

BETWEEN 1870 and 1897 the number of professional women writers in the United States increased from 159 to 3,163.

GEMS.

NOTHING is denied to well-directed labour, and nothing is ever to be attained without it.

THERE are few things impossible in themselves, and the application necessary to make them succeed is more often wanting than the means.

If we deliberately set to work to contravene any of nature's laws we shall inevitably secure our own deserved defeat. But if we study them to discover their real meaning, which is always one of ultimate beneficence and progress, and if we cherish the same aims, applying to them methods appropriate to ourselves, we shall be at one with her and assist her in the elimination of evil without sacrificing any of the warm and kindly sentiments that honour our humanity.

THOSE who contradict everything, and those who assent to everything, opposites as they seem to each other, are alike in their disloyalty to truth and simplicity. One opposes from the love of opposing, the other agrees from the love of agreeing; neither is actuated by the pure and unselfish love of truth. Yet this is the one element which is essential to all good conversation. No eloquence can compensate for its absence, no gifts, graces, or sympathies can make it superfluous.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LEMON JUICE—Take twelve large new lemons, put them in a lined saucepan with cold water, let the water gradually come to the boil, simmer gently till the lemons are soft; take them out and squeeze all the juice into a basin and strain it; mix in for every one pint of juice two pounds of sugar; stir, and boil over a slow fire till the sugar is dissolved, then skim it carefully, and keep it for use.

ASPARAGUS AND EGGS—Beat six eggs lightly with a fork; add one half teaspoonful of salt, one tablespoonful of milk and one tablespoonful of water. Have a skillet hot with lard and butter mixed, and turn your eggs into it. Cook quickly, stirring all the time. Add two dozen asparagus tips, that have been boiled, and as soon as the eggs are firm but soft turn into a hot dish and serve immediately.

TO BOIL A PICKLED TONGUE—Soak it in cold water and put a skewer through it underneath to keep it in shape. A tongue weighing three and a half pounds is a very small one. Put it on in cold water and bring it to the boil, then let it boil very gently for about three hours. A tongue weighing six pounds just takes three hours, but a small one takes a little less time. Allow tongue to cool a little in the water and then take off the skin.

ESSENCE OF VANILLA—Cut eight sticks of vanilla into very small pieces, put them in a large bottle, pour in one quart of rectified spirits of wine, and cork it down tightly; keep the bottle in a warm temperature for two weeks, draw the essence off and decant it into small, well-stoppered bottles; or cut three pods of vanilla into very small shreds, put them into a bottle with one pint of brandy and cork the bottle, shake occasionally, and in three months' time it is ready for use.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ACCORDING to a high authority, cold water is a valuable stimulant to many, if not all people. Its action on the heart is more stimulating than brandy. It has been known to raise the pulse from 76 to over 100.

EACH day of the week has served as a day of rest somewhere: Sunday among Christians, Monday with the Greeks, Tuesday with the Persians, Wednesday with the Assyrians, Thursday with the Egyptians, Friday with the Turks, and Saturday with the Hebrews.

IN Holland the Sunday-delivery is opposed by the religious classes to some extent, and those who do not wish that a letter be delivered on Sunday leave the small notice attached to the stamp, and the letter remains over till Monday in the post-office. Those who do not care if the letter is delivered on Sunday, or, rather, who wish it delivered on that day if it arrives at its destination, simply tear off the small restriction clause. Therefore, the matter simply is the delivery of the letter on arrival, and has nothing to do with its travels on Sunday.

THE bride's pie was formerly, in some parts of Yorkshire, so essential a dish on the dining-table after the celebration of the marriage, that there was no prospect of happiness without it. This was always made round with a very strong crust, ornamented with various devices. In the middle of it, the grand essential was a fat laying hen, full of eggs. It was also garnished with minced and sweetmeats. It would have been deemed an act of neglect or rudeness if any of the party omitted to partake of it. It was the etiquette for the bridegroom always to wait, on this occasion, on his bride. The term bridegroom took its origin from hence.

CUBAN ladies rarely walk, and even when shopping, sit in their carriage while the shopkeeper brings out his goods for their inspection. As women of society the Cuban ladies shine. In the ball-room, at bull-fights, at the theatre, or at any fashionable rendezvous, they are seen to the greatest advantage. The most lavish toilettes are worn, representing wealth and brilliancy, which impart a particularly gay aspect to the scene. Married ladies out of doors wear gowns that would only be suitable for the ball-room in Europe, the beautiful climate of Havana, even in winter, allowing the thinnest costumes to be worn.

By stirring water in a pail with a wooden paddle you can make it boil if you keep at it long enough. Five hours of constant and rapid stirring are sufficient to perform the feat successfully. The water will, after a time grow warm, and then it will grow hot—so hot, in fact, that you cannot hold your hand in it, and finally it will boil. Heat is developed in almost any substance which is subjected to continuous or very violent action. It is an old trick for a blacksmith to forge without fire. Long continued and violent hammering on two pieces of wire will heat them to such an extent that they can be welded together. A lead bullet, if shot directly at a stone wall, will develop heat enough by the contact to melt and fall to the ground as a molten mass. There are many other occasions wherein this mechanical development of heat becomes manifest.

WE have received from the Great Eastern Railway a copy of their new booklet, entitled "Holidays in the Old Flemish Cities." The best route is via Harwich and Antwerp, and it is difficult to imagine a pleasanter or more restful holiday than one spent among the quiet, old-world towns of Belgium, such as Antwerp, Bruges, or Ghent, with their famous cathedrals and picture-galleries, quaint medieval streets, and old-fashioned market-places, all reminiscent of bygone days, and, in some cases, properly long departed. Particulars of routes and timetables (free) can be obtained of the Great Eastern Railway Company's Agents, or from the Continental Traffic Manager, Liverpool Street Station, London; E.C.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

WARRIED.—It would be a bigamous marriage.

HAIRER.—March 15th, 1871, fell on a Wednesday.

IN DEBT.—You must pay the full amount demanded.

DURDEN.—The verbal notice is sufficient provided you have evidence.

JUDY.—Take it to a dealer in such goods, and ask him to make an offer.

SYMPATHIZER.—Dreyfus was publicly degraded on January 5th, 1895.

PURST.—We do not give personal recommendations such as you ask for.

A. B. O.—It would go to the next-of-kin, if the owner died intestate.

L. B.—Lye is made by allowing water to filter slowly through hardwood ashes.

ANKNEY.—Write to the incumbent of the parish where the marriage took place.

INHERITANCE.—If the son takes the father's estate he is so far liable for his father's debts.

AGNES.—The Foundling Hospital is in Guildford-street, Russell-square, London, W.C.

W. T.—We think you should give the subject serious consideration before coming to a decision.

OLD READER.—Your only course is to threaten him with the County Court if he does not pay.

ANXIOUS TO IMPROVE.—Carlyle is beyond ordinary readers; his style renders his meaning obscure.

UNCERTAIN.—The fact of the name being inverted will make no difference in the legality of the marriage.

ARGUMENT.—The line "Ships that pass in the night," &c., is from Longfellow's poem "Tales of a Wayside Inn."

THE DARTLING.—George I. of England introduced the black cockade from Germany as a mark of the servant.

POUND OF FLOWERS.—A flower put in the morning will outlast two flowers out later in the day when the sun is upon them.

WARY MOTHER.—The official who received your letter went to fulfillment of duty about it to his superior officer.

A LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—Impossible to give any opinion without a knowledge of the whole situation of affairs.

INDIGNANT.—The young lady perhaps showed a lack of good taste, but she did nothing wrong, and the incident is very trivial.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—If the furniture is your own property, or belonged to you before marriage, your husband cannot interfere with it.

BROKEN HEARTED.—It appears to us that there are faults on both sides, each being too reserved, and exhibiting too much pride.

FUSILLER.—"Fusil" was the old name for the flint-lock, to distinguish it from the matchlock, and fusiliers were those who carried fusils.

A. M.—A cork that is steeped for a few moments in hot vaseline will, it is said, serve all the purposes for which a glass stopper is used.

MAIN READER.—Members of Parliament, on taking office under the Crown, vacate their seats, and have to present themselves for re-election.

HARD-UP.—Yellow piano keys may be whitened by brushing them over with a mixture of half an ounce of nitric acid and five ounces of soft water.

CHIN CHAN.—Hong Kong is an island off the coast of China. The British colony, of which it forms part, includes a portion of the adjacent mainland.

PAPERHANGER.—The term, "a sale of work," is sometimes used to indicate that it is that and nothing more. A "banquet" usually includes entertainments.

ORANGE BLOSSOM.—The cost of an ordinary marriage license varies from £1 15s. to £2 15s. 6d. For other particulars apply to any clergyman in your district.

M. N.—If the house was taken at an annual rental, and if there was no agreement as to notice, you are entitled to six months' notice ending at the date of entry.

IGNORANT LOVER.—When your companion bows to a lady, you should do so also. When a gentleman bows to a lady in your company, always bow to him in return.

MODEL HOUSEWIFE.—When ink is spilled upon a carpet, cover the place immediately with fine ash. When this becomes black, carefully remove it and put on more.

PAUCITY.—The origin of the modern circus dates back to about 1770, when Philip Astley, a discharged soldier, gave exhibitions of horsemanship in an improvised ring at Lambeth.

UNGRATEFUL MOTHER.—One voyage will soon either cure your son or prove his love for the sea. In the former case you will feel your sacrifice was not made in vain; in the latter, you will realize that it is his recreation, wherefore you have no right to hinder him back.

SOBERNESS.—Assuredly you ought to see a medical man without delay; we fear there is more wrong than you mention, but even if not, what is described indicates a very faulty state.

EMIGRANT.—If the articles you are taking with you into the States are worn goods—that is, have been in use for a time, no duty will be charged upon them; but if new, they must pay like other merchandise.

CITIZEN.—A city is also a town. We call any place which has several thousands of inhabitants a town, but cities are only created by special charter, or by virtue of their being the seat of a bishopric.

ROSIE POSE.—No time can be given for whipping cream; it depends on the cream and the skill of the person whipping it; very thick cream whips in a few minutes, and when not so thick takes a good while.

MURIEL.—Few things are so dangerous to health as damp clothes; both outer and under garments should be thoroughly aired before being worn, and a new garment should have particular attention paid to it in this respect.

L. M.—Before blacking brown boots, take a raw potato, cut it in half, and rub over the leather with it. It will then be found very much easier to apply the blacking, and the appearance of the boots will be far more satisfactory.

TIDINGS.—The best thing you can do with the money cat is to rub it all over with castor oil, working it specially into the broken parts of the skin; the animal will lick itself, and induce slight sickness, but that does no harm.

POVERTY.—Economy does not mean meanness and stinginess. It implies the best and wisest use of the means that are given; and since it is a question that comes into every phase of life, public and private, no one need be ashamed to practice it.

THE SINGLE STRING.

When the violet buds in the warm, wet woods,
And the robin sings in the trees,
There comes a voice from a distant land,
Calling, calling me.

Out from the narrow common track,
Out from the straightened ways,
Back to the old Bohemian life,
In the wild and reckless days.

From the time of the rose to the passing of snows
I tread to the mark of men;
But a longing comes with the first spring blooms
And tugs at my heart again.

Draws at my heart with a single string,
That my love can never break.
Though I sleep in twin every other tie
When I came here for her dear sake.

Oh, my heart has needs that her narrow creeds
Can neither know nor fill;
Though I tread the line for this love of mine,
Tho' I hid my pulses still;

When the violet buds in the warm, wet woods,
And the robin sings in the trees,
Still comes that voice from a distant land,
Calling, calling me.

R. T.—It is certainly time the parents should be told; indeed, we think you have already delayed longer than was proper, unless there was good reason for such delay. If you must write, state the facts in plain, straightforward terms.

SUN.—When the brass is made smooth by burning, or filing with a very fine file, it may be rubbed with a fine-grained stone or with charcoal and water; when it is got quite smooth and free from scratches it can be polished with rotten stone and oil, alcohol, or spirits of turpentine.

VALENT.—To eradicate pimples, avoid all rich, greasy and indigestible food, bathe frequently, and take a good preparation of sarsaparilla for a considerable length of time. As an external application, bay rum or a fine quality of cologne water dabbed on the face frequently with a soft cloth is useful.

T. E. W.—A license can be obtained from the office of the bishop's registrar, but such license only enable the parties to be married in the diocese in which they are licensed, and would cost about £2. One of the parties must have resided in the district for fifteen days prior to the date of the marriage. A special license costs about £20 10s.

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QUACK.—The word "quack" is derived from several European languages—German, Dutch and Danish—in which it has the same signification, and is much alike. In the low German the word is quacken, and was applied to the cry of a duck, which from its sound is evidently the origin of the word. The application of the term quack to an ignorant medical pretender is ancient, and arose from the fact that travelling mountebanks of former days were loud and boastful, while the noise they made was of no more account than the quacking of ducks.

BAIRN.—To make mayonnaise without oil put the yolks of four eggs in a small, narrow saucepan. Melt four ounces butter. Let it stand a few minutes. Then remove the white scum and pour the clear butter in a cup, leaving the sediment in the bottom of the saucepan. Add the clarified butter slowly to the yolks while stirring constantly. Place the saucepan in a pan of hot water near the fire. Stir until it thickens and remove at once. Continue the stirring for a few minutes. Add a pinch of salt, a teaspoonful lemon juice, and last two tablespoonfuls whipped cream. The cream, if not at hand may be omitted, but the sauce is not quite so nice. Great care should be taken, in preparing this sauce, to remove it from the fire as soon as it begins to thicken, otherwise the yolks will curdle.

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